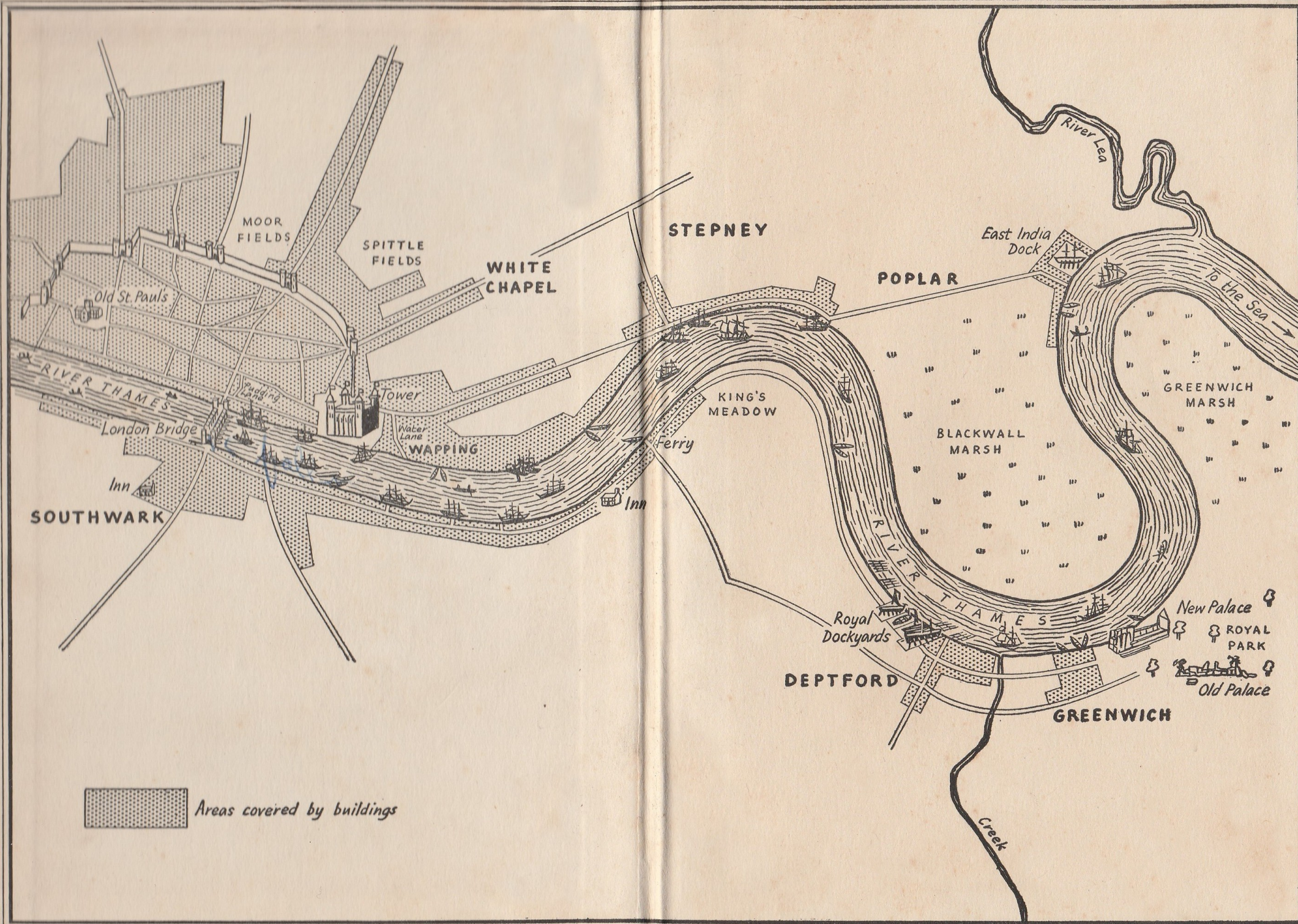


GINN • CITY IN PERIL • HOBLEY

CITY IN PERIL





A CITY IN PERIL

By
L. F. HOBLEY

Illustrated by
VERA JARMAN

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The Cable Story

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L. F. HOBLEY

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PREFACE

THE Active Readers offer exciting tales which will appeal to children of many types in the age range of 9 or 10 to 15. But they are more than a collection of supplementary readers—they are planned to meet two specific needs: the encouragement of the reading habit, particularly in unbookish children; and the development of initiative through exercises of a somewhat unusual kind.

In Secondary Modern Schools boys and girls who do not respond happily to literary material will often find great enjoyment in these fast-moving Active Readers. The simple language and easy-looking pages are an invitation to those who do not read fluently. The many illustrations are a further inducement to read, as well as a stimulus even to sluggish imaginations.

Towards the top of Primary Schools, the Active Readers provide just the kind of adventurous story to appeal to quick-minded 9- and 10-year-olds. These stories are exciting and even hair-raising at times, but they are well written, they are authentic and informative, and because of their wide range in space and time they help to give point and reality to history and geography lessons.

Each Active Reader story is followed by an exercise section, which is intended to promote independent effort. Teachers looking through the books will appreciate the various functions of these unconventional

exercises: to develop the habit of reference to pictures, maps, plans and glossaries; they encourage resourcefulness. Whether the books are read by older, slower children, or by eager 9- and 10-year-olds, the stimulus to independent effort provided by the exercises is an important educational justification for their use.

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I

Old London

It was March in the year 1665. The early morning sun shone brightly through the narrow windows of the little red-tiled house in Water Lane.

"Come, Peter," cried a voice, "get up, lad, this is your last morning in London for many a day. Waste it not in idle sleep."

"All right, Father," replied Peter, tumbling out of bed.

He walked over to the window, rubbed his sleepy eyes and looked down into the street. The upper storey jutted out over the lower one so that the little window looked straight down on to the narrow cobbled street. The houses on the other side also jutted out, so that Peter could almost have jumped across to the upper storey opposite. He had often

fought a battle at point-blank range with his friend Guy who lived there, and the two boys had fired away at one another with clay pellets from their pop-guns.

Peter had always loved stories of the sea, and he imagined his little window was the bow of a ship and he was about to board the enemy. One day he had actually put a plank across, and was pulled back by his father just in time. But that had been long ago, and now his dream was coming true ; he was really going to sea, and that very day he was to say goodbye to London.

Peter was fourteen years old, and he was going to make his first trip in a small trading vessel to the distant shores of West Africa.

Now that the time had come, he was not so sure that he wanted to leave London, where he had spent a happy childhood. London was such a huge place, always so full of life. He had never been anywhere else, but he had heard that there was no other town a quarter as large, anywhere else in England, perhaps in the whole world.

It was said to have nearly half a million people living in it. He remembered the exciting times when King Charles II had come back to the kingdom, when there had been fireworks and feasting and great bon-fires had been lighted in the streets.



The most exciting times were when he went to the fair at Southwark. There he saw jugglers keeping what appeared to be a dozen coloured balls all flying through the air at once ; performing animals, bears and monkeys, and, most wonderful of all, the fire-eater who chewed and swallowed glowing coals, and who held a live coal on his tongue, and then placed a raw oyster on it,

and blew upon the coal with bellows so that it flamed in his mouth and cooked the oyster, which he then swallowed with the coal. No, it would not be pleasant to leave all that behind.

His thoughts were interrupted by a voice calling, "Are you never coming, Peter? You won't be able to lie abed at sea."

Peter started. "I am up, Mother," he replied. "I was taking a last look at London."

He dressed quickly, and stumbled down the stairs which were quite dark after the bright sunshine.

His mother and father, Charles, his younger brother, and Anne his sister were sitting round the table at breakfast. His father had already been working for hours, and on ordinary days Peter too would have been helping him. Thomas Fletcher was a sail-maker and usually had plenty of work, for the Thames was alive with a constant stream of shipping. There were trading vessels, barges, lighters which unloaded the larger vessels, tiny skiffs

and wherries. These took people from place to place much more quickly and pleasantly than travel by the streets, which were rough and uneven, and often ankle deep in mud and filth.

Peter ate a hearty breakfast.

His ship was sailing before noon, and, with his clothes done up into a bundle, he stood ready to say goodbye.

"I shall be back before the summer is over," he said, "so I shall soon be seeing you again."

"Now see here, Peter, son," said his father, "here is a length of fine sail-cloth. Take it and trade it for gold or other valuables if you can. There is no cloth in all the world like English cloth, and it should be worth a goodly sum."

"Oh, thank you, Father," cried Peter. "I shall sell it to the King of Africa for a huge sum, and come back loaded with riches."

They all laughed, and then Peter shouldered his bundle quickly, and hurried away.



Little did he think he would never see his father again or that he would never play another game of football with Guy and his other friends. Within six months they were all dead.

"I wish Peter had stayed at home in a safe job instead of going on such a dangerous journey. I am sure he will be drowned, or killed by those African savages," said his mother that evening.

"A boy must go out into the world, and run some risks," replied her husband.

"Well, that may be," sighed his wife, "but I shall not be happy until he is back safe and sound."

Life seemed a little dull to Charles and Anne when Peter had gone. They missed him when, huddled up in their tiny bedroom in the cold evenings, they listened to the rats scuttling behind the plaster. Even Anne did not mind the rats by day, but at night they sounded strange and frightening. Peter had often told them stories of the sea, and their uneven floor had become the deck of a ship, or the rough plaster walls, which were cold and damp, had easily been transformed into the wet sides of a cabin.

Their home was in Wapping, near the river, and a little way outside the city walls. They often went down to the riverside to watch the ships. The water was very dirty, and here and there streams flowed down from the town. Into these, people emptied dirty water, sewage and garbage, so that there was a horrible smell, but the children were used to it, and laughed when they saw some fashionable ladies or gentlemen pass by holding up to their nose an orange stuck with cloves, to disguise the smell.

The children often wandered through the city streets, playing a game of stepping-stones, jumping the pools of stagnant water and heaps of rotting refuse that usually lay about the roads. Now and then scavengers would collect the worst heaps of rubbish and cart it outside the walls where it would be piled up on a piece of waste land. But the children had to work too, helping with the tasks of the household.



One evening in March their father came home looking very worried, and after the children had gone to bed, he said to his wife :
 “ There is bad news, wife, very bad news.”

“ Not the plague ? ” she asked anxiously.

“ Yes.”

“ God defend us,” cried his wife. “ I feared some disaster when that terrible comet appeared last month.”

“ Aye, the second comet in a few months,” said her husband. “ They say the one that appeared last December was shaped just like a coffin.”

“ Yes, it was so,” replied his wife.

“ They say the plague comes to London every twenty years. It is just twenty years since the last visit. More than 14,000 died then, and my mother used to tell of the terrible times in 1625. There were 40,000 that time.”

“ God preserve us,” cried his wife. “ That was just forty years ago.”

“ It was,” said her husband grimly.

“ But what can we do ? Can’t we leave the city ? ”

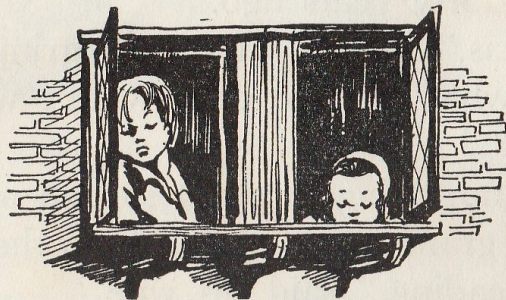
“ No, no ; things are not so bad as that.”

“ God grant that they can keep the plague from spreading,” said his wife.

"We must hope so," said her husband. "There have often been odd cases of the plague, without it spreading through the city. But I am worried."

"I shall keep the children at home," said his wife. "I shall not allow them to go out of our street."

For several days a cloud seemed to hang over the house which was usually so happy. The children were not allowed to go further than their own narrow street. Gradually their parents began to look more cheerful, and one day in April their father told them they might go down to the river once more. There had been scarcely any more cases of plague, and it seemed that their fears had been groundless.



II

Lost

It was a beautiful spring that year, fine, warm and dry, and the children soon forgot all about the plague. One day at the beginning of May, Charles and Anne had gone into the city and were wandering along the streets when a party of mummers came by, a number of men in bright green and yellow dresses, decorated with scarves, ribbons and lace. Some had twenty or forty little bells fixed round their legs, and as they danced along the street, shaking their feet, they filled the air with the jingling of the bells. Others of the mummers were playing pipes and drums, and others rode hobby-horses with brightly patterned coats.

The children gazed spellbound as the gay procession passed by. Then they joined



the crowds of men, women and children who had fallen in behind, and were following the dancers. They passed through street after street, until they were in a part of London they had never seen before.

At last the mummers went dancing into a church, and the children stopped.

"We must go home," said Charles, "it is getting late."

They turned, and walked along the street through which they had just passed. The road twisted and turned so much that Peter soon lost all sense of direction. Anne was getting tired, and asked how far it was.

"It can't be far," said Charles hopefully, and he hurried on.

Now the children were quite lost. The street they were in seemed strangely deserted. A man and woman were walking hurriedly along, in the middle of the road. Charles moved out into the road to ask them the way, but they drew aside, and hurried on. The sound of their footsteps died away, and the children stood in the silent street, wondering which way to go. Suddenly the deep bell of a church near by crashed through the silence, but it was no merry peal of bells, but one deep, solemn note, repeated over and over again. Then another bell began to toll, and that too was slow and solemn.

Another figure appeared in the street, an old woman in dirty ragged clothes with a white staff in her hand. She slipped out from a doorway, and hobbled quickly along the street, and then stopped at a door on which was painted a great red cross. On the door was scrawled in chalk the words, "Lord have mercy on our souls."

Then Charles knew what was the matter. It was the plague. He had heard how a



terrible plague had killed thousands of Londoners in the past, and that houses where people had died from it had a red cross on the door.

Charles was thoroughly frightened now. He stood a moment, wondering what to do. He instinctively held his breath, to avoid taking in the poisonous air that he thought must hang about the plague-ridden houses. He said nothing to alarm Anne, but took her hand and ran with her along the middle of the road as fast as he could. The road led into another. They stopped and looked up and down it. This too was silent and deserted.

“Which way do we have to go, Charles?” asked Anne.

He did not know which way to turn. Road seemed to lead from road without end. They might wander for hours and get deeper into this plague-stricken district. Charles thought of Anne, and tried to sound cheerful.

“I don’t quite know,” he said, “but we will soon find someone to tell us the way.”

Just then he caught sight of a watchman at the end of the street.

"There," he said, "the watchman will help us."

They hurried along the street. As they got near, the man said in a gruff voice:

"Keep off, you can't come out here."

Charles's heart sank.

"But we are lost," he said, "and we thought you might be able to tell us the way home."

"My job is to stop people from leaving this district," replied the man in a surly voice.

"But we don't live here," Charles stammered out. "We live at Wapping."

"Wapping!" returned the watchman. "Do you expect me to believe that?"

Anne was beginning to cry, and Charles only prevented himself from crying too by a great effort. Suppose the watchman refused to believe him, he thought. They might be turned back again into the plague streets. There would be other watchmen

guarding the other streets leading out. They might never get out, but would wander about until they dropped from exhaustion and lack of food—or until the plague killed them.

"We do live in Wapping," he said. "We do, we do."

"Then what are you doing here?"

Charles told him all about the mummers and how they had followed them, until they were lost.

"Are you sure you haven't been visiting anyone here?" asked the man.

"No, no, we haven't. We don't know anyone in this part of London," said Charles tearfully.

"I can't help that," said the watchman.



‘I’ve got my job to do. I mustn’t let anyone out. Stand back from me. How do I know you haven’t got the plague already. Get back up the street where you came from.’

Charles turned hopelessly and led his sister back the way they had come.

The children walked on in silence for some time.

Anne was tired and wanted to sit down on a doorstep, but Charles dragged her away, and they kept to the middle of the road.

“You must keep away from the houses,” he said, and holding his sister’s hand, he helped her along as best he could, but when she began to cry he found it hard not to cry too. He would have liked to knock at a door and ask the way, but he dared not, for he feared that behind every door might be the plague.

At last they turned into a street with another watchman at the end. They went nervously towards him, and when he asked what they wanted, Charles told his story once more.

“O God, make him believe me,” he prayed silently, as he looked anxiously into the man’s face.

The watchman appeared to believe him, for he let the children pass and told them which way to go.

It was beginning to grow dark as the children hurried on, and the grim tolling of the bells faded into silence.



As soon as the plague area was left behind, they found themselves in the bustling, busy, friendly London again. Candles were being lit, and put in hanging lanterns in the streets. At last they turned into their own street, and saw their own lantern outside the door.

Charles had bravely cheered his little sister on their long tramp, and Anne had been

almost too bewildered at the strange happenings to cry, but now that they were safely home, they both burst into tears.

Between their sobs they told of the mummings.

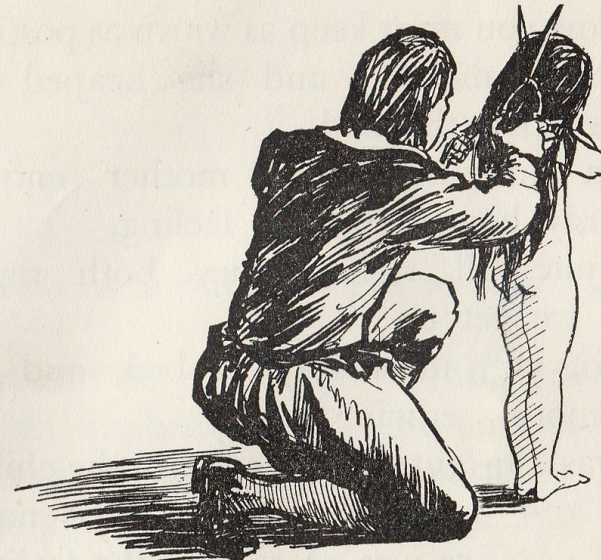
"Which way did you go?" asked their father anxiously, when Charles told how they had been into a part of London they had never seen before. Then Charles told them of the house with the red cross on the door.

Immediately both parents sprang up, their faces pale with anxiety.

"The plague," cried their mother. "You have been in contact with the plague. Dear God, what shall we do?"

"Take off your clothes, Charles, and you too, Anne, every single thing. We must burn them at once," said Thomas.

Trembling, the children undressed, and their father picked up the garments on a stick and thrust them one after the other into the fire. Then he seized the scissors and cut off all Anne's lovely long hair as



close to her head as he could. The hair too was thrown on to the fire. Then he turned to Charles to cut his hair as short as possible. Next he sprinkled some brimstone and saltpetre on the fire, to destroy the infection with their fumes, and a choking vapour filled the room.

"Now wash the children and put them to bed," he said when the room had cleared of fumes. The children were cowering in front of the fire, miserable and frightened. They were washed and hurried off to bed.

"Now you must keep as warm as possible," said their mother, and she heaped fresh clothes upon the bed.

Next morning their mother enquired anxiously how they were feeling.

"Quite all right," they both replied. "Can we get up?"

"No, you must stay in bed, and have some more medicine."

It was a bright sunny day, and the children tossed and turned fretfully in their narrow beds, but there was no sign of the feeling of chill and cold shivering which was often the first sign of the plague, no sickness, no headache. Were the children all right, after all? Their parents searched their bodies for the blisters, with rings about them, which were signs of the plague. They could see none. They sighed with relief. There was anxiety for a few days, but at last it was quite certain that no harm had come of their adventure in the plague streets.

III

A meeting and a rescue

ALTHOUGH he had been very angry with the children for being so naughty in wandering into strange parts of London, their father was so glad that they were all safe and sound after all, that he said one day: "We will celebrate our lucky escape; we will have a day out tomorrow, and visit your Aunt Catherine at Greenwich."

There was great excitement at this, for the children had hardly ever been even so short a distance out of London.

The next day was fine and sunny, and with the day's provisions in a canvas bag, the family set off. They walked down to the river, and waited for the ferry-boat to take them to the other side. Soon it came, the boatman shouting rude things to the people

waiting and to every boatman he passed. They got in, and were soon rowed to the other side. There they set out to walk the three miles to Greenwich, past great ship-building yards stretching on and on near the river's edge. Here the oak logs were floated down to the river and then cut and shaped to form the timbers for the ships of Britain's Navy which was at that very moment fighting battles against the Dutch.



At last they came to Greenwich, where they ate their food under the shade of the trees in the royal park. While their parents rested, the children climbed among the ruins of the old palace. Charles strutted through the roofless halls, and imagined himself not

Charles the poor sail-maker's son, but Charles II, King of England. He had once seen the king in the distance in St. James's Park playing Pell Mell, a kind of ball game, with some of the fine gentlemen of the court. There were no fine gentlemen now in the old Greenwich Palace, which had been badly damaged in the Civil War, but it made a splendid place to play in.

Soon their father called them, and they went to the little cottage where their Uncle John and Aunt Catherine lived. Their uncle was a stone-mason, and he was working on the fine new palace which was being built for King Charles down by the waterside. Their uncle took the children to see the unfinished palace while their parents stayed to talk to their Aunt Catherine. They looked at the great walls of white stone, the long corridors, and the endless rows of windows which belonged to hundreds of rooms.

"Why does the king want such a huge palace?" asked Anne. "He can't live in all the rooms at once."

Just at that moment a man came round the corner behind them, with long, rapid strides. He had long curling hair, dark brows, and a rather grim, sad expression.

"The King!" exclaimed their uncle, who had seen Charles before when he came to inspect the building.

He dropped on to one knee. "Your Majesty," he stammered.

Anne and Charles stood open-mouthed for a moment, not knowing what to do. Had the king heard what Anne had said, they wondered? would he be angry? But the king smiled. "So you think my palace is too large," he said. "Well, perhaps it is, but it is not all for me, you know. A king's palace belongs to many besides himself. A king has no real home of his own."

"Then I'm glad I'm not a king," said Anne, who loved her home.

"You mustn't say that, Anne," said her brother. "I wish I was a king."

The king turned to him, "And what is your name?" he asked.



"Charles, your Majesty," he said.

"Ha, my own," said the king, "and my father's. May it bring you better fortune than it has done to the Stuarts." The king looked sad, but then he smiled again and said, "Goodbye, Anne; goodbye, Charles. Remember the poor king with a palace but no home," and he turned and walked away.

The children watched him go in silence, then they rushed back to tell their father and mother.

It was soon time to return, and they walked back, chattering merrily about their meeting with the king. When they got near the ferry, they noticed that the place seemed very deserted. The empty ferry-boat was there, but there was no sign of the boatman. Suddenly several men sprang out from behind some sheds on the river-bank and seized Thomas before he had time to resist. They tied his hands behind him and marched him off between them. It was the press-gang, which was always on the look-out for strong men during the Dutch War.



Their victims were seized and carried off to Bridewell prison. From there they were taken to ships of the Navy, where they might be forced to serve for several years. The ferry-men and other boatmen shut and bolted themselves in their cellars when they got word that the press-gang was about.

Anne began to cry, and her mother tried to comfort her.

"You take Anne home, Mother," said Charles, "and I will follow them and see if I can help father to escape."

Charles did not wait for his mother to say anything, but followed the press-gang, slipping from house to house so that he was not noticed. There were two or three other men tied up like his father, and they were all being urged along in the middle of the press-gang. It was getting dark, and when they came to an inn with a cheerful light shining through the windows, one of the press-gang said, "What about a drink? I think we've earned one."

"Aye, aye," said the others, and they all entered, pushing their prisoners in with them. Charles crept up to the door and looked in. Most of the gang were standing drinking, but one of them stood just inside the door. Charles had hoped to get in and creep up to his father, but he could not get past the man at the door. He ran round the building, and found a back entrance leading into a yard. He crept in silently, and looked round in the dim light that came through the windows. He saw an apron hanging up; he took it and tied it round himself, picked

up a small keg, and went boldly through the door, hoping he might be taken for one of the serving-boys. He kept his head down and passed quickly along a passage and into the room where the men were drinking. He put down the keg and crept quietly across the room. Nobody took any particular notice of him, and he got behind his father and whispered, "Father, I am going to try to cut your rope. Don't take any notice of me."



His father started, but said nothing. The men of the press-gang were laughing and joking, and paying little attention to their prisoners. The rope was tough, but at last

Charles managed to cut it through. His father kept his hands behind his back, as though they were still tied, and moved slowly towards the door. Suddenly he made a rush at the man standing on guard, and with one swift blow on the chin knocked him senseless and dived through the door. Charles followed him closely. Too late the members of the press-gang nearest to the door saw what was happening and before they could get to the door, Thomas and Charles were gone. Several of them rushed through the door, but Charles had stopped just outside and knelt down in the doorway. The first two men crashed headlong over him, and in the darkness the others stumbled over them. Charles slipped away in the confusion and doubled back into the yard at the rear.

The men of the press-gang heard Thomas's footsteps as he ran along the road, and they all dashed after him. Charles crouched down behind some barrels and waited.

Meanwhile his father had run swiftly towards the west, hoping to get home across



London Bridge. He turned first to the left and then to the right, and the sound of his pursuers' footsteps grew fainter and their shouts died away. He slowed down to a quick walk and wondered what had become of Charles. He knew it was useless to go back to see if he needed help. The best thing he could do was to prevent the press-gang from recapturing him.



The street he was following turned to the right, led down to the river, and there came to an end. Thomas hesitated: he dared not go back, for if any of the press-gang were still following him they could not be far behind. A high wharf lay to his left, with buildings coming to the water's edge.

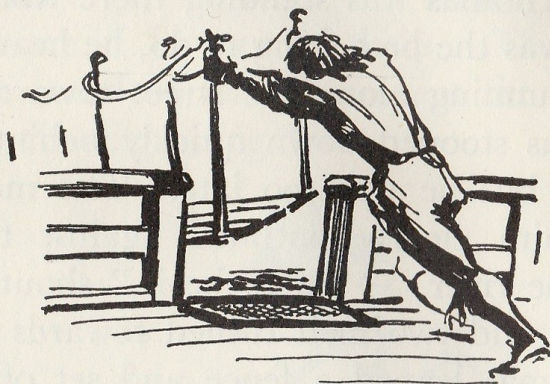
He could not go that way. To the right it was possible to get along the river-bank, which was low and muddy, but this direction led back towards the inn from which he had escaped.

As Thomas was standing there wondering what was the best thing to do, he heard footsteps running along the street towards him. Thomas stooped down quickly behind some boxes, but he was too late. The men had seen him clearly outlined against the sky and the river. "There he is," shouted two voices, and two men rushed towards him.

Thomas leaped a fence and set off along the river-bank, splashing through the mud, followed closely by the men. Ahead of him loomed another wharf, with a ship tied up alongside. At the other end of the wharf stood two men, dimly seen against a flickering lantern. The press-men were close behind him, and when they saw the men in front, they shouted "Hi! stop him."

Thomas saw a gangway leading from the wharf to the boat, and he darted across it.

As soon as he was over he seized the end of the gangway, and, with a mighty heave, pushed it over the edge of the boat, and it crashed into the water, just as the press-gang men reached the other end.



There appeared to be no one on the boat, and for the moment Thomas was safe, but he heard the men searching round the wharf. Their shouts had brought several of their companions to the place, and there were now five or six of them. Presently they found a heavy timber which they dragged to the edge of the wharf, and then let it fall on to the deck of the boat. Thomas raced to the end of the boat, and took a flying leap

into the river. Fortunately he had lived all his life near the water, and had learned how to swim well as a boy. He struck out strongly.

Meanwhile the press-gang rushed over the timber gang-plank and along the deck of the boat, but none of them thought it worth while following Thomas into the river. With muttered curses they turned back and soon Thomas was out of earshot. He swam on as quietly as possible, in case the gang found a small boat and rowed after him, but all was quiet, and he reached the north bank of the river in safety. He scrambled out of the water and lay gasping on the bank. He stayed only a few minutes, and then he dragged himself to his feet and walked wearily home.

When the press-gang had seized her husband, Mary and Anne had watched helplessly, and when Charles left them to follow his father, they stood forlornly, wondering what to do. They looked anxiously for some sign of the ferry-man, but the press-gang was out and there would be no ferry-boats that

could find a corner for you in the kitchen if you like. The press-gang is a cruel thing, and 'tis we poor women who suffer most."



She gave them some supper, and found them a blanket each. Poor little Anne was worn out with exertion and misery, and she curled up in her blanket and was asleep in a moment. But her mother lay awake far into the night, wondering what had happened to her husband and Charles, and what she was going to do if Thomas was carried off to the Navy. He might not come back for years; he might never come back, for a terrible number of sailors died, some in battles with the Dutch and far more from

the fearful diseases that killed off hundreds of them every year.

At last Mary too fell into a fitful sleep.

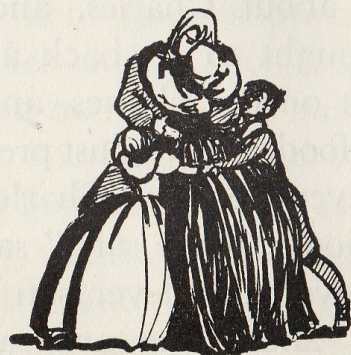
When Thomas reached his house, wet through and weary, he found the place empty. His neighbours had seen nothing of his wife or children. He guessed that, with the press-gang out, it would have been very difficult for them to find any boatman to take them across the river, and he thought it quite likely that his wife and Anne had been too late to get across the bridge. But he was anxious about Charles, and wondered whether he ought to go back and look for him. He put on dry clothes, and had some badly needed food, and was just preparing to set out for the riverside when Charles appeared.

"Thank God you are safe," said Thomas.

"What a brave and clever son I have. If your mother and Anne are safe, what a lucky family we are. How did you manage to get across the river?"

"I took a boat and rowed across," he said. "I will take it back tomorrow."

Next morning Thomas and Charles were at the north gate of the bridge before sunrise, and when the gates were opened and they saw Anne and her mother they rushed forward, and Thomas threw his arm round his wife and Charles hugged his sister. Mary could hardly believe her eyes when she saw both husband and son safely before her, and she hugged Charles again and again, and called him her young hero. It was indeed a happy family that sat down to breakfast that day.



IV

Plague in Water Lane

BUT happiness did not last long. It began to be whispered that the plague was spreading. A proclamation by the Lord Mayor called upon all inhabitants each morning to water, sweep and cleanse the streets before their doors, and to remove all dirt and rubbish.

Thomas listened to the proclamation with growing anxiety. All his old fears of the plague returned, for this order of the Lord Mayor must be meant to try and prevent it spreading.

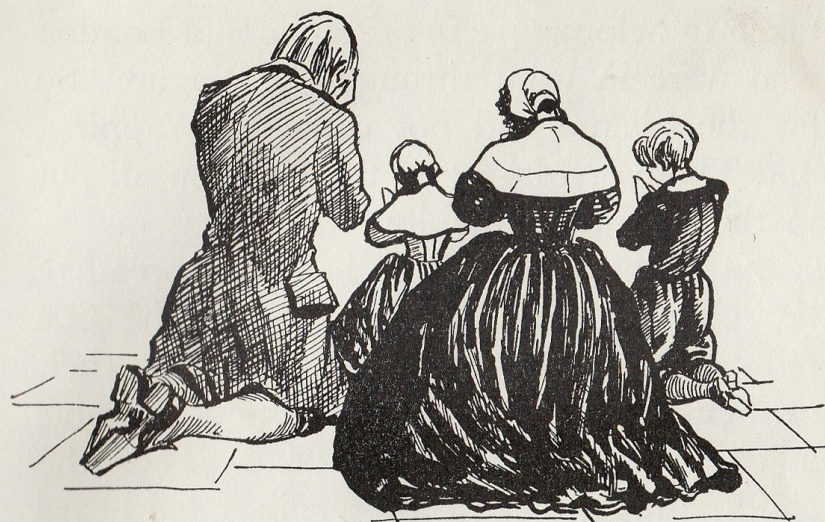
Once more Thomas told his children they must not go farther than the end of their own street, and life became dull and anxious for them. Every day when Thomas went out on business he heard news of fresh cases.

In the first week in June forty-three deaths

from plague were reported, most of them in the Parish of St. Giles. The weather turned very hot, and the children longed to go down to the cool river, but they had to stay at home.

The hot weather suited the plague. In the second week of June there were one hundred and twelve deaths, and the plague had now passed from St. Giles into neighbouring parishes. It crept along Holborn, and down towards the Strand and the river. At first, in its movement eastwards, it passed round the wall to the north, and raged in the crowded districts outside, leaving the city almost untouched. Then the plague crossed the river to the poor districts in Southwark. In July deaths began to increase in the city itself. On July 6th Thomas heard another proclamation, issued by the king, calling for a day of fasting and prayer on Wednesday July 12th. The next day he learned that the king had left London.

On the 12th there was no breakfast on the table when the children came downstairs.



“Why isn’t there any breakfast?” asked Charles.

“The king has said we must all fast and pray today, and perhaps God will take away this terrible plague,” said their mother. They all put on their best clothes and joined the crowds going to the church. All knelt while the minister prayed, and begged for forgiveness for their sins. He preached a sermon, and warned the people that their wickedness had brought upon them the anger of God. The plague was the sign of that anger, and they must repent. Then a collection was

taken to help people in other parts of London who were in want through the plague. So far the plague had not come to Wapping, and Thomas, Mary and the children all put in their coins thankfully.

But nothing seemed to halt the spread of the plague, and a few days later the first red cross was seen in their street. Soon their own church bell was tolling its mournful note as one by one the victims died. Then the children lay awake in the evenings and heard the dread rumbling of the wheels of the dead-cart, and the frightening cry, "Bring out your dead. Bring out your dead."

The children now needed no telling to stay in. They looked out of the window and watched the few passers-by hurrying down the centre of the street, and holding their cloaks over their mouths and noses as they passed doors with the red cross upon them.

One day they heard that Guy, their friend who lived opposite, had the disease, and the next day his mother and father fell ill too.



"I can't bear to think of them all lying helpless there," said Mary to her husband.

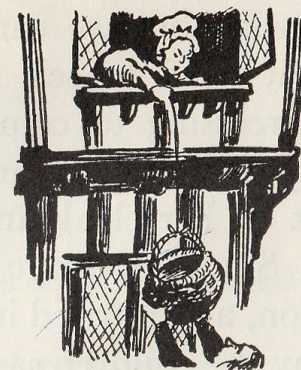
"Can I not do something to help them?"

"You must not do anything to risk being infected. Remember Anne and Charles."

"Can we do nothing, then?"

"You must stay here," he replied, "but as I have to go out, I will see what I can do. I will arrange for food and medicine to be taken to them. A nurse will be coming to them regularly, until . . ." He did not finish his sentence, but she knew what he meant.

The children watched a man come and fix a lock and bolt on Guy's door, and then he stood and prevented anyone from going in or out. Presently an old woman, dirty and poorly dressed, came and was let in by the watchman. She was a nurse-keeper, a poor woman paid a small wage to tend those who were ill. Few of the nurses had any training, and some actually spread plague, or by giving wrong treatment hastened the death of their patients. Presently a



messenger came along, and some food and medicine were handed in through the door, which was opened just enough to let them in, and then was slammed to again. Sometimes a basket was lowered from the upper window and food was put into it.

One day a pedlar passed along selling medicines. "Buy my potion," he cried. "A sure remedy for the plague. I have the fume which will rid you of the pestilence."

"You hear that?" said Mary. "Shall we buy some?"

"Nay," said her husband. "They are useless. There is nothing to stop the disease."

"But perhaps this is something new. Let us not miss the opportunity."

"All right, wife, but we can ill afford it. I am finding it hard to sell my sail-cloth. The ships are refusing to come to London. But buy it, buy the potion, it may do good."

His wife put on her cloak and slipped out into the street. She paid a large sum willingly, seized the potion, and hurried into the house.

Then one day the children saw the searcher for the dead, the old woman with the white stick, enter Guy's house, and that night the dead-cart stopped opposite their house. Guy was dead, and his body was taken in the cart to be buried. There were so many bodies that separate graves could not be dug, and they were thrown in hundreds into great pits outside the town.



V

A friend in need

THE next morning the children heard someone calling their mother.

"Mary! Mary! Good neighbour Mary!"

They looked out of the window and saw the haggard face of Guy's mother. She was leaning out of the open upper window, and calling over and over again.

"Neighbour! Good neighbour!"

Charles had been warned not to open the window, so he called to his mother who came running upstairs. She ran to the window and looked out. When Guy's mother saw her, she called more loudly than ever.

"Help me, help me, good neighbour."

Mary did not know what to do. She went to open the window, and then hesitated.



“Poor soul,” she said. “She looks heart-broken. Go outside the door, children, and I will open the window and see what she wants.”

The children went outside the door, and Mary cautiously opened the window a little way. The stricken woman was only a few feet away.

“Oh, neighbour, for the love of God help me,” she said.

“What can I do?” asked Mary.

“Come and save my husband and my little daughter from this terrible old nurse. She is old, and understands nothing. I mistrust her sorely. Little Beth is still quite well, but I am fearful that she will not be so for long.”

“And you, Bertha, how are you?” asked Mary.

“I am afraid I am lost. I have the plague, and you can do nothing for me.”

“Then what do you want me to do?”

“Come and dismiss the nurse, and say you will look after my husband. I will stay

in this room so that you will not get the infection. Guy and I have not been out of it since we were taken ill," said she, and added with a break in her voice, "until they carried Guy out last night. Please help my husband and Beth."

Mary did not know what to do. "I will ask my husband," she said.

She went down to ask Thomas what he thought.

"You must not risk infection. Think of your own family."

"But I cannot bear to think of poor little Beth at the mercy of that old hag of a nurse. I have heard of nurses giving the plague to other members of a family, so that when all were dead they could steal the valuables in the house."

"That may be, but it isn't your business. For God's sake don't risk your safety," said Thomas.

"Safety," said Mary. "What safety has any of us? This terrible plague has come upon us by God's will, and if He wills that

I should die, then nothing I can do can prevent it. Think of neighbour Wheeler who shut herself in her house a month ago, and allowed no one in, yet the plague has taken her. I must do something to help before I die, if die I must."

"What will you do then, Wife?" asked Thomas.

"I will go to little Beth and her father, and do what I can for them. I will not bring infection to you or to the children. I shall not be able to come back into the house, but will come to the window, and you and the children can talk with me."

"Go then, Mary," said Thomas with a sigh. "We must help one another."

Mary went up to say goodbye to Anne and Charles, and to get a few things together.

"Now, Anne," she said, "I am going to help little Beth and her father. You must be a little mother to Charles, and look after him and your father."

"Yes, Mother," said Anne bravely, "but why can't you bring Beth to live with us?"

"I cannot. There has been a case of plague in the house, and no one will be allowed to leave it for forty days. The watchman has sealed the door."

"And will he let you in?"

"If I say I am going to nurse Beth and her father, he will let me in, but I shall not be allowed out for forty days."

And so Mary crossed the narrow street, and was almost as cut off from her family as if she had crossed the ocean. She could look at them and talk to them through the window, but that was all. Like many others among the Londoners, especially the poor, she was risking her life to help her neighbours.

As soon as Mary entered her neighbour's house she told the nurse she was no longer needed. Little Beth who seemed quite well, was playing with her toys in the back kitchen, but her father lay very ill in the front room downstairs, and her mother had fallen exhausted at the upstairs window after calling for help. Mary went fearlessly into the upper room and put the sick woman on her bed,



bathed her aching forehead with vinegar, gave her medicine and arranged the bed-clothes. Then she attended to the sick husband, who seemed to be in a high fever. Beth came to the door to see what was happening, but Mary called to her and said, "Stay in the kitchen, Beth, and I will come and play with you presently."

When she had made the patient more comfortable, she washed thoroughly and fumed her clothes and went into the kitchen. If she was careful she might be able to keep

the infection away from the kitchen. How wonderful it would be if she could keep Beth safe, and nurse her mother and father back to health. But she was already too late: Beth was beginning to shiver, although it was quite a warm day. Mary's heart sank. She put the little girl to bed, with plenty of warm clothes, and gave her some medicine. Within a few hours Beth was very sick and in a high fever.



Mary hurried from one patient to the other, giving them hot broth and medicine, keeping them well covered with bedclothes, and soothing them unceasingly and preventing them from falling into the deep sleep which was supposed to be dangerous. Blains or blisters with discoloration round the edges

were appearing on Beth's body. Soon the little girl sank into a stupor from which Mary could not rouse her.

Mary had no sleep that night. On the following day she was relieved to find that Bertha seemed to be no worse. Perhaps, after all, she was to be one of the very few who recovered from the plague. Bertha asked about Beth, and Mary had to tell her. She dragged herself down to the little girl's bedside. Beth was unconscious most of the time, but once or twice she smiled faintly at her mother. During the night she died.

Mary persuaded Bertha to go back to bed. She then told the watchman of Beth's death, and asked him to obtain a doctor for the sick man, who continued in a fever, getting neither better nor worse. Later the doctor came and told Mary what to do, and left some medicine.

Mary had been so busy that she had scarcely had time to speak to her husband and children from the window. All three of them would come to the window, and look

out at six o'clock each morning when they got up, and Mary would be there at the opposite window to greet them.

After the death of her little girl, Bertha seemed to lose strength rapidly. Her heart beat violently, and she lay gasping for breath. Once or twice her mind wandered, and with a sharp cry of agony she got up and tried to get to the window, but Mary gently but firmly put her back on the bed, and soothed her. The next day she was much weaker, and, in spite of all that Mary could do for her, she died that evening.

Meanwhile Mary's other patient continued battling with the fever, and under her careful nursing at last began to recover. The doctor came again and said it was not the plague, and that he would almost certainly get better. He told Mary what a brave and clever nurse she had been. Mary burned all the clothes that had come into contact with Beth and Bertha, and cleaned everything else thoroughly.

VI

Plague strikes the Fletchers

ON the third day after Bertha's death, only Charles and Anne appeared at the window.

"Where is father?" asked Mary anxiously.

"He doesn't feel very well," said Charles. "He said it would be better for him to go down into the cellar and stay there, and we are not to go into it."

Mary hurried down to the watchman who was outside the door.

"Quick," she said. "I fear my husband has the plague. Please go quickly and get the doctor to find out whether he really has it, so that if he has I can go and nurse him."

The doctor, who admired Mary's pluck, came quickly to examine Thomas. She watched him go into the house. Time seemed



to stand still while she waited for him to come out. At last the door opened, and he crossed the street. His face looked grave.

"I fear it is bad news, Mary. The plague spares no household, and poor Thomas is stricken. But you are a brave woman, and will nurse him well, I know. I will send you the best medicine I can. I need not

tell you to try to keep the infection from Charles and Anne."

"But cannot they be taken away, Doctor?" she pleaded. "They have not the plague, and surely it is not right to shut them up in the house with someone ill of the plague in it?"

"I am afraid they cannot go," he replied. "The government has ordered that all houses where there is the plague must be shut up, and no one, well or ill, may be allowed out."

"Except when the plague has killed them," said Mary bitterly. "What does the government know of our troubles? The king and his fine ladies and gentlemen have fled from the city."

"I know, Mary, it is hard, but it is done to try and prevent the disease from spreading farther still. We must obey the law, and do what we can."

Mary crossed the narrow street once more. There was fear in her heart. No one seemed to know how this terrible illness spread, or

what to do to prevent it. She was sorry now that she had not begged her husband to leave London when the plague had first appeared. They had talked about it, but they were poor, and could not afford to leave their work. There was nowhere to go where they could be sure of earning their living, and the people in towns around London were becoming very unfriendly to people escaping from the city, in case they brought the disease with them. But it would have been better to suffer hardship together in some unfriendly town or village than to die of the plague at home.

Mary did not despair, however, and she greeted her husband as cheerfully as possible. She quickly prepared broth and medicine, and made him as comfortable as she could in the cellar. She was able to keep the kitchen for cooking and preparations, and keep the children in the upstairs room.

As soon as she arrived, Charles and Anne started to come running downstairs. They were longing to throw their arms round

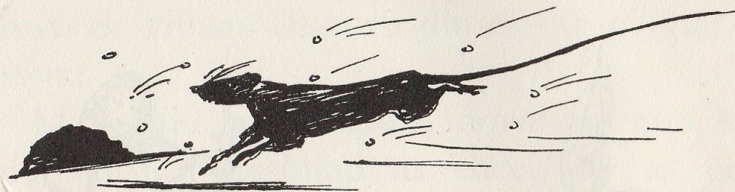
their mother whom they had missed so badly.

"Don't come down," cried Mary. "You mustn't kiss me, you mustn't come near me, but at least we are together in our home again. Promise me you will do exactly as I tell you. I will bring your food to the top of the stairs, and you must not open the door until I have gone down again."

The children were very disappointed, but did as they were told. They shut themselves in their little room, and played the same games over and over again. Anne had one



doll, and she dressed and undressed it a hundred times a day. Charles's favourite game was the rat game. The burning of brimstone had cleared away most of the rats, but there were still a few. Charles would sit at one end of the room as still as possible, with his brother's old pop-gun, his eyes glued on the hole at the other end of the room. When at last a rat came cautiously out, he would train the pop-gun upon it, then he would suddenly let fly with the clay pellets.



The rat would retreat hastily. At night, however, the rats could venture out into the room, climbing on to the furniture and sometimes on to the bed, searching for crumbs. Although people did not know it, the rats were as dangerous as wild beasts of the jungle, for they carried fleas, and the fleas carried

the germs of the plague. But the children did not know, and they laughed happily to see the rats scampering to their holes. And so although the children did not go out of the room, the plague germs were carried in.

Meanwhile, Thomas tossed and turned in his bed in the cellar. Sometimes he was light-headed and did not realise who Mary was. He wanted to get up to go out to earn some money. Mary would soothe him and say they had plenty of money. "You shall go out soon," she said, and then he would lie back and close his eyes. Next time he opened them he would be quite himself, and he would thank his wife for all she was doing, and beg her to get some rest. For three days he lay in much the same condition, then he complained of soreness under the arms. Painful lumps appeared, and the doctor came and treated them. The pain grew worse, until Thomas became unconscious.

"I am afraid he will not live long," said the doctor, and within four hours Thomas was dead.

Mary did not tell the children, and when that night they heard the dead-cart stop outside they did not realise that it was for their father. They had not seen him since he had fallen sick and they had not been able to say goodbye to him.

And now began a very anxious time for Mary, wondering whether the infection that had killed Thomas would also strike the children. She did not think about herself. She had seen Beth, Bertha and Thomas die, one after the other, and she was still untouched. She began to feel that the plague could not harm her.

Three more days passed, and Mary kept the children to their room, but on the fourth day Charles complained of sickness. At one moment he was shivering, the next flushed and feverish ; the plague was claiming yet another victim. Mary had no doubt about the awful truth. She carried him down to the cellar, and then returned to the bedroom and removed everything that Charles had used. Poor Anne was now left alone. Some-





times she sat and gazed at the mournful sights in the street, sometimes she played with her doll. As soon as she could spare time, Mary sat at the bottom of the stairs and told Anne story after story until Anne forgot her loneliness, and laughed and clapped her hands at the amusing adventures of the children in her mother's stories. Then Mary would return with a heavy heart to sit by Charles as he tossed and turned on the bed just as his father had done.

It was during the third day of Charles's illness that Mary began to be anxious about herself. At first she thought it was weakness from the strain of nursing, for on many

nights she had scarcely slept at all. But it was not that. Once more she recognised the familiar shivering and feverishness, but this time it was in herself.

All day she struggled on, dosing herself with medicine in the hope that it would do her good, although it did not seem to have been much help to the others. But by nightfall she could keep going no longer. She called to the watchman, and begged him to send for the doctor.

When he came he saw at once what was wrong. "Oh, Mary," he said, "this dreadful disease seems to miss nobody. Come, my dear, we must make you as comfortable as possible. I will send a good nurse to look after you and Anne. She is quite well, I hope."

"Yes, she looks rather pale from staying indoors so long, but she seems quite well."

"Pray God she will keep so," replied the doctor. "You have certainly done the best you can for her."

Charles grew steadily worse, and his moans and sudden shouts of pain were hard

for his mother to bear, but she lay quite helpless. On the fifth day of his illness Charles grew much weaker and his moans died away. Now Mary would have been cheered if only she could have heard the shouts that had so worried her the day before. Then at least he had had the strength to shout ; now he just lay without moving.

The doctor came again that evening.

"How is he, Doctor?" asked Mary anxiously.

"I am afraid he has gone where plague and suffering will have no power to hurt him," said the doctor quietly.

Poor Mary wept bitterly ; her husband was dead, her son Charles dead ; life hardly seemed worth the struggle. She lay back with closed eyes. Then she thought of little Anne, alone upstairs, and she told herself that she must get better for her sake. And then she thought of Peter away across the sea, undergoing all the dangers from sea and storm and from strange savage people. But at least he was out of the plague-ridden city,

he was safe from that, so perhaps after all it was a mercy that he had gone. She turned over and fell into a peaceful sleep.



VII

Peter returns

AT that very moment Peter's ship was nosing its way through the mist off the mouth of the river Thames.

Peter had sold the roll of cloth which his father had given him, partly for gold dust and partly for spices which he hoped to sell at high prices in England.

He had made several friends on board ship, particularly Edward Fuller, another boy about his own age. Another was James, who was rather older.

It was early September when their ship entered the Thames. They had received no news of England since they had left in March. They were surprised to see a number of ships anchored right out in the mouth of the river. Then they too were ordered to anchor.

"What's wrong?" asked the look-out.

"Plague," came back the chilling answer.

"Plague in London. Thousands are dying every day. Orders are that no goods are to be taken out of London, for fear of spreading the infection. You can unload, but you can't take on any fresh cargo."

The captain of the ship hesitated a moment, then gave orders for the ship to prepare to put out to sea again.

Edward lived in London, and he and Peter were feeling very anxious about their families, so they asked the Captain if they could be set on shore. A boat was lowered. As they



were preparing to go, James asked if they minded his going with them, as he too wanted to join friends in London. They could not refuse, so all three got into the boat and were pulled ashore, Peter carrying his precious bundle.

They landed and set off at once to walk to London. Night came on before they had gone far, and they sheltered in a shed on a riverside wharf.



They plodded on all next day along the desolate and muddy track some way from the river, which was bordered by mud-flats and marshy beds of reeds. It was late afternoon when they neared the city. A number

of country people were just coming away from some stalls that had been set up beside the road some little distance away from the city. Here the townsfolk came to buy food from the villagers, who were afraid to venture into the streets.

Peter asked a man how things were in the city.

"Terrible bad," he replied. "Half the houses shut up, and hundreds dying every day. See the plague pit over there?" and he pointed away across the desolate open fields to where a large hole had been dug. "They say that cartloads of dead bodies are thrown in there every night. No proper burying at all."

Peter shuddered to think of Anne and Charles and his mother and father in the plague-ridden city, and he hurried on. Edward too was anxious. His family lived farther west, inside the city in one of the lanes leading down to the river near the Tower of London. He had two younger brothers and two sisters.

Now they entered the outlying streets, which were silent and deserted, apart from a few watchmen. Fires were burning here and there. The nearer Peter got to his own street, the more frequent grew the fatal red crosses. Soon he turned down towards the river and said goodbye to Edward, who was anxious to get into the city before sunset. It was agreed that they would meet the next morning on Tower Hill.

"Can I come with you?" asked James. "I have nowhere to go."

"Yes, if you like," said Peter, though he would much rather have been alone. Peter turned into Water Lane. Fires were burning, and through the smoke he could scarcely see his own house. He had been hurrying all day, but now he hung back and hardly dared to look at the door.

"Come on," said James, "which is your house?"

Peter moved forward. His heart sank as he saw door after door marked with a red cross. The smoke cleared a little; there was



his home; with a sickening feeling he saw the red cross and the sealed door.

He went up to it and tried to open it.

"Come away from there," said the watchman. "You can't go in, they've all got the plague there."

"But it's my home," said Peter. "I must help my brother and sister and parents."

"Thomas Fletcher is dead, if he was your father," said the man.

"But the rest, what about them?" asked Peter. "Surely they are not all dead."

"No, no; not all. The boy's dead, though, and Mary Fletcher's very bad."

"Then I must go in and help her," exclaimed Peter.

"Once you go in you won't be allowed to come out again," said the man. "If you want to help her you'd much better stay outside. The doctor has sent a nurse who is looking after her, but if you could earn a bit to buy her some more eggs and butter, it would do her good. I reckon she's running short of money."

"And what about the little girl Anne?" asked Peter anxiously.

"She's all right, I think," replied the watchman. "I often see her up at that window, but I expect she is asleep by now."

"I must take her away," said Peter. "I will take her away from this awful city before she catches the plague too."

"You can't," said the watchman. "Orders are that no one must leave the house for forty days."

"What, poor little Anne must stay up there all alone until she dies of the plague? I don't believe it."

"It's true," said the watchman.

"Can't you let me take just the little girl?" pleaded Peter. "She hasn't the plague; surely there could be no harm in that."

"I dare not disobey my orders," said the man obstinately. "I'll tell the nurse presently. Come back early in the morning."

"Is there anywhere where we can sleep tonight?" Peter asked.

"There are plenty of empty houses, but I wouldn't go in any of them," said the watchman, "if you don't want the plague yourself."

"Where shall we sleep then?" asked James.

"I think we had better find a small boat," said Peter. "There are probably several tied up near the bank. They will be free from infection."

"A good idea," agreed James, and they turned to go. Then Peter remembered Guy. He looked at the door of his friend's house; that too was locked and marked with the red cross.

"Aye, they are dead too," said the watchman, seeing him look at the house opposite. "All except the father. He's nearly well again."

So his friend Guy was dead. Peter felt very forlorn. This was not the jolly homecoming he had imagined. He turned and walked miserably down the street.

Nearly all business on the river had been at a standstill for many days, and there were several empty boats within easy reach. They found a suitable one and were soon stretched out in it, but neither boy fell asleep. Peter



was making all sorts of impossible plans for rescuing Anne and his mother from the plague-stricken house and city and taking them to a beautiful healthy place where he

would take his father's place as bread-winner and home-maker.

James too was not sleeping. He was waiting for Peter to go to sleep. He had decided to make an attempt on the bundle of gold dust and spices. If he could take it without awakening Peter he would do so, but, if necessary, he was prepared to take it by force. He was bigger than Peter, and if it came to a struggle, he could knock him out or throw him into the river.

Peter lay unconscious of the danger that threatened him. At last his troubled thoughts and imaginings gave way to real dreams and he fell asleep.

Soon Peter's regular breathing told James that it was time to act. Peter had tied his bundle to his wrist, but James took out his knife and crept across to Peter, felt carefully for the string, and cut it. Then he began gently to remove the bundle. He had got it from under Peter's head and was just pushing a piece of wood under Peter's bundle of clothes to take its place, when a sudden

hideous shriek rang out. A woman suffering from the plague, half mad with pain, had rushed to her window and opened it, and was uttering piercing shrieks. James started violently, and jerked Peter's bundle so that his head fell sideways. Peter awoke, and instinctively grabbed at his bundle of gold-dust and spices.

James, however, already had it in his hand, and he was preparing to leap from the boat on to the landing-stage when Peter seized his leg. He came down with a crash into the boat. Peter sprang forward and tried to tear the bundle from James's grasp. James realised that he would not now be able to get away with it unless he could first silence Peter. Letting go of the bundle he seized Peter and they rolled over and over in the bottom of the boat. Peter fought with all his strength. The bundle meant more to him than just spices and gold dust ; it was now the means by which he was going to bring help and nourishing food to his mother and sister. He struggled to his feet, but James



too was up and grasping at Peter's throat with his powerful hands. Peter seized his wrists, and, by a tremendous effort, loosened his grip. Then James swung Peter off his feet and tried to thrust him overboard, but Peter clung to him, and the two crashed into the water together. Peter was a fine swimmer, and now he had the advantage. He forced James's head under water, until he was compelled to let go his grip. James was now at his mercy, for Peter could have held him down until he was drowned. Until then not a word had been spoken, but now James gasped out, "Let me go, Peter, for the love of God, don't drown me." Then his body went limp, and Peter realised that his enemy was half drowned, and far too exhausted to do him any further harm. He dragged him to the bank of the river, and left him there to recover. Then he climbed back into the boat and found his precious bundle.

Now that the struggle was over, he realised that he was wet through and cold. He jumped ashore and hurried to the nearest

fire that burned in the street. There he told a watchman that he had pulled a boy from the river, and asked him to see whether he needed help. When the watchman got to the place, however, James had slunk away. Peter never saw him again.



VIII

A rescue

PETER dried himself by the fire, and then sat talking to the watchman until dawn. Then he hurried to Water Lane. Long before he reached the house, the upstairs window opened, and he saw Anne leaning out and waving. She looked pale, but she laughed and clapped her hands with glee at seeing her brother.

“Have you come to take us away?” she asked. “I am so tired of being here alone.”

“No, Anne,” said Peter, “the watchman won’t allow anyone to leave the house. I have something here that I can sell, so that I can buy you and mother some good food.”

Anne was very disappointed, but she smiled bravely.

Peter gave Anne a message for his mother,



and then said goodbye and went off to change some of his precious bundle into money, and to meet Edward. He managed to find a goldsmith who gave him money for his gold dust, and then he made his way to Tower Hill where he found Edward waiting for him. It was an even sadder tale that Edward had to tell. All his family except his father had died ; his mother, his two brothers and two sisters. His father had gone away, and the house was empty. Peter told Edward about Anne and his mother.

“Do you think we could get Anne away?” he asked. “It seems wrong to keep her shut up there with the plague in the house. She is perfectly well.”

"I am ready to help you to save your sister," said Edward. "I wish I had got back earlier to help my family."

"Yes," said Peter, "we must get her out without taking her through the rest of the house, in case she becomes infected. And we must keep away from the other rooms, for if we catch the plague I shall not be able to come back to help mother."

"We shall have to lower her from the window, then," said Edward.

"Yes, so we must get the watchman out of the way. The question is, how?"

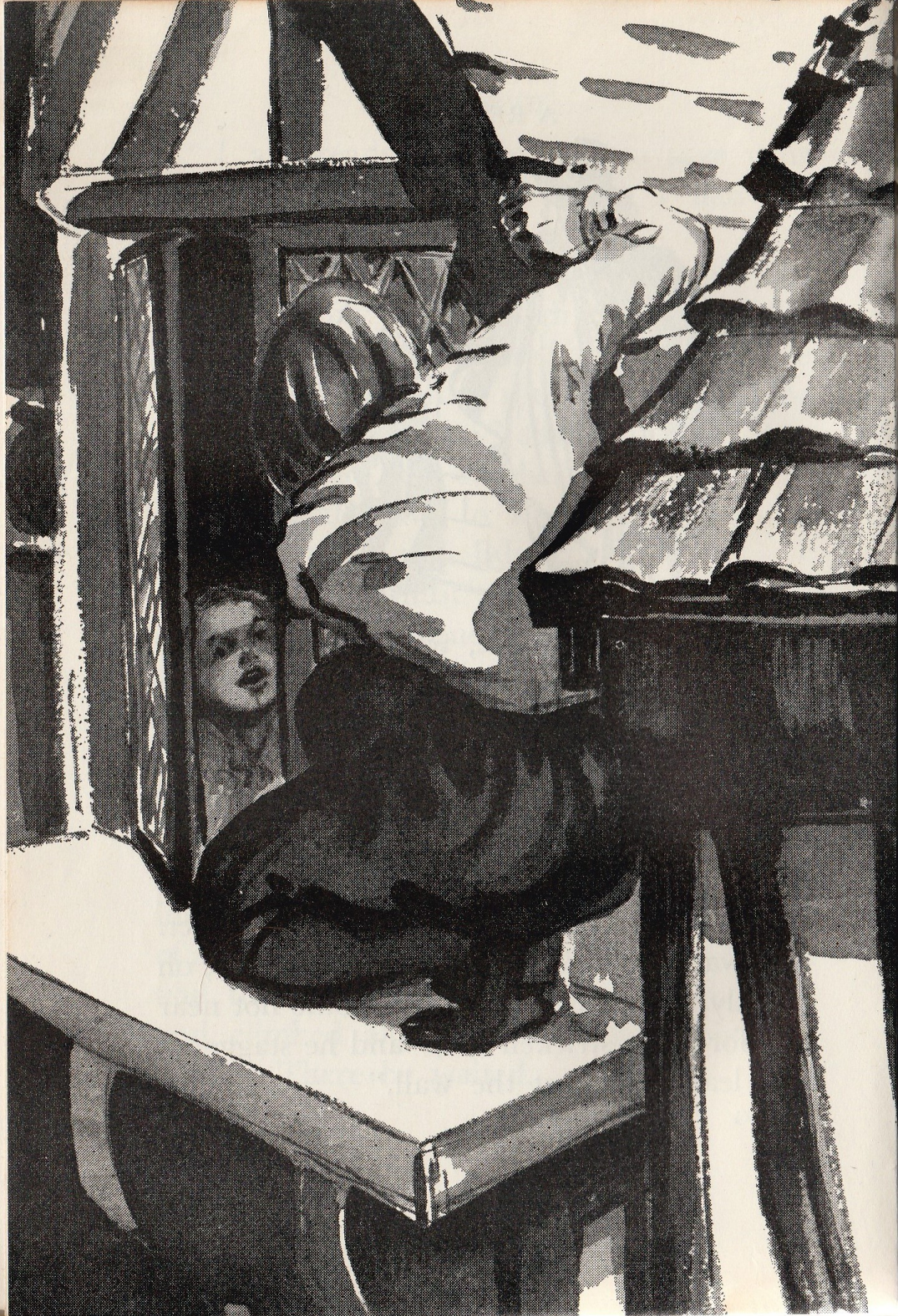
"I know!" exclaimed Edward. "I will come with an urgent message for him, and while he is away you can climb in at Anne's window and get her away."

"Good, we will try tonight."

When it was quite dark, they put their plan into operation. Peter climbed on to the roof of a shed at the back of a neighbouring house, and then pulled himself on to the roof-top and climbed along to the roof of his own home. There he waited.



Long after midnight, when the dead-cart had made its rounds, and the bonfires at the ends of the street had burned low, Edward came running along the street. He ran to the watchman, and gasped, "Help! help! Get help, for God's sake. My mother is suddenly stricken—at the third house in Cloth Lane," and he pointed to the end of the street. The watchman got up slowly. "Quickly, oh quickly," begged Edward. "Come not near me, for I am stricken too," and he staggered and leaned against the wall."



"The third house, you said?" asked the watchman.

Edward nodded, and the watchman disappeared in the darkness.

Peter climbed down and tapped at Anne's window. She saw him and opened it.

"Oh, I knew you would come," she said.

"Now, quick!" said Peter, "put on your cloak. We must lower you from the window. My friend has called the watchman away, and we must slip down before he comes back."

Peter drew the bed up to the window and tied his rope to it, and climbed out. "Now, Anne," he said, "you climb out and get on my back, and I will climb down with you."

Anne did as she was told, and Peter began to lower himself gently. He had only gone a foot or two, however, when he heard footsteps at the end of the street.

"It's the watchman," whispered Edward, who was standing below. "Quick, get back in again. I must hide, or the watchman will want to know why I sent him on a false errand."

Anne was no light-weight, and climbing up with her on his back was not easy, but they just managed to get back through the window by the time the watchman returned. He noticed the open window, and called out, "Are you all right, up there?"



"Look out, Anne," whispered Peter, "and tell him you are all right."

Anne did so.

"Did you see or hear a young man out here just now?" asked the watchman.

"No," replied Anne. "I have only just looked out for a breath of air."

They heard the watchman grumbling to himself.

"Now what must we do?" asked Anne. "You are trapped in here with me."

"We must try to get the watchman out of the way again. Would the nurse help us, do you think?"

"She has been very kind to me," said Anne.

"Then we will try," said Peter. "Call to her, and tell her I am here, and ask her if she could ask the watchman to go to the apothecary's for a plaster."

The nurse agreed to do as Peter suggested, and a few minutes later they heard her speaking to the watchman. He grumbled, but set off for the apothecary's, mumbling to himself as he went.

Quickly Peter threw the rope over. "Now, Anne," he said, "we will try again."

In a minute they were standing in the street. Edward slipped out of the doorway where he had been hiding. Meanwhile, the nurse pulled up the rope and shut the window

so that the watchman would not see it and raise a hue and cry for them. They were just in time ; as they rounded the corner they heard the watchman's footsteps. The boys took a hand each and hurried Anne down to the river, where they got into a boat and rowed across to the other side.

"We are going to Aunt Catherine's," said Peter. "She will look after you."

It was already light by the time they reached Greenwich. They knocked at their aunt's door, but there was no answer. A neighbour looked out of the window.

"Are you from London," she asked.

"Yes," said Peter. "My aunt lives here."

"Get away from here," said the woman.

"Get away, we have had enough Londoners here bringing the plague."

"I am sure my aunt would take us in," replied Peter.

"Not if you are from London. We will drive out anyone who comes from London. Your aunt has gone away. Be off, or we will set the dogs on you."

"Come along," said Peter, "let's go. We will find somewhere to live."

"I know !" exclaimed Anne. "Let's go and live in the old palace. There are lots of rooms and passages where the roof hasn't all fallen in."

They made their way to the ruin, and found a sheltered corner where they could make themselves comfortable.



IX

A recovery and a new home

EDWARD stayed with Anne while Peter went to buy food for his mother and for themselves, for they dared not show themselves in the streets of Greenwich.

Peter went first to see the watchman and make his peace with him. The watchman had not yet discovered that Anne had gone, and he greeted Peter in a friendly way.

"How is my mother?" asked Peter.

"About the same," was the reply. "The nurse had to send me for a plaster in the night, so maybe she will be a bit eased this morning. Two messages I had last night. A young man came shouting and asking me to get help for his mother round in Cloth Lane, but when I got there I couldn't find anyone wanting help. The young man

seemed pretty bad himself, but when I came back he was gone. I couldn't make it out."

Peter could not help smiling. "I know all about it," he said, and he told the watchman what he and Edward had done. Fortunately, the watchman was a good-natured man, and when Peter slipped four shillings into his hand he laughed at the trick that had been played upon him and said he would say no more about it.



Peter then hurried off and bought some food from the country people. He returned and told the nurse that he would come every day with food and whatever else they needed.

The nurse said his mother still lay almost motionless, except when she groaned with the pain of the great swellings or botches as the nurse called them, behind her ears.

Peter went to Greenwich and told the others his serious news. Then he said, "I'm going back. Don't worry if I don't come back tonight," and he walked quickly away.

It was evening when he reached the home which was his home no longer. There was no change in his mother's condition, except that the swellings were more painful than ever. All night Peter waited. It was the longest night he had ever known, but at last dawn broke over the stricken city with its thousands of sufferers and anxious watchers. It was mid-August and nearly 8000 people had died during the last week.

About seven o'clock a window opened and the nurse looked out.

"One of the botches has burst," she said.

"How is she?" cried Peter.

"The fever is already declining," she answered.

"Thank God," said Peter, but he knew it would be some time before they could tell whether his mother would get better.

Later that morning the swelling behind the other ear burst, and Mary fell into an exhausted sleep, but by evening she was definitely better, though very weak.

Peter hurried back to Greenwich with the good news.

The next day there was no doubt that the crisis was past, and there was every hope that Mary would get better. She was very weak, but the news that Anne was safe and well, and that Peter was looking after her, cheered and strengthened her. At last the day came when she was able to come to the window and see Peter for a few minutes.



It was still a long time before she would be allowed to leave the house, and then it would have to be cleaned, fumed and lime-washed inside, and aired before they would be allowed back inside it.

Peter brought his mother to their temporary home as soon as she was well enough, and she was delighted with it. "It is wonderful," she said, "when so many unfortunate folk have found nowhere to go, and have been driven about the countryside by the frightened



country people. I am very lucky to have two men to look after me."

Nevertheless, they were all glad when they were able to return to the little house in Water Lane. The red cross on their door

had been replaced by a white one, and that too they were now able to clean off. The fires in the streets were out, most of the padlocks, the nurse-keepers, the watchmen, almost all the signs of the terrible plague were gone. There were still a few cases, but the disease seemed to be no longer so deadly, and most of those still suffering from it recovered.

The family returned with mixed feelings : relief that the plague was over, thankfulness that they at least were now well and reunited, but sadness at the empty places of their father and Charles. Edward was now just like one of the family.

Mary began work at her spinning-wheel, and Anne helped her, while Peter obtained work with a near-by sail-maker. Edward's father had been a biscuit-maker, and Edward soon found a job near his old home. This remained locked up until one day in the new year Edward's father returned.

When he had seen the dead-cart carry away his wife, his two young boys and his



two little girls, he could bear the sight of the empty home no longer, and one night he had broken out of the padlocked door and fled. He had joined a ship whose captain he had supplied with ship's biscuits, and made the voyage to Bristol. There he had worked for a time, until news reached him that the worst of the plague was over, and he decided to return to see whether Edward had come back.

Edward now left Water Lane to live with his father in Pudding Lane, where they soon restarted their biscuit-making. The two families frequently visited one another. Edward and his father missed having a woman in the house, and in the summer they suggested that the Fletchers should come and live with them. Their house was larger than the one in Water Lane, and if Mary brought her spinning-wheel, she and Anne could still do their work, and Mary could look after all of them.

On Saturday the 1st of September, Mary, Peter and Anne carried their personal belong-

ings to their friends' house. Mary intended to spend the Sunday in cleaning the home thoroughly.

"All men are dirty creatures," she said. "A home without a woman is always like a pigsty."

Peter had arranged to fetch the spinning-wheel and any other things they wanted in a cart on the Monday.

Pudding Lane was much like their own Water Lane, narrow and cobbled, with overhanging upper storeys. The street sloped down towards the river, not far away.



X

A terrible night

ANNE lay down to sleep feeling a real Londoner at last. She had always been a little disappointed that she had lived outside the real city. And now she was living only a hundred yards from London Bridge. She thought she was going to enjoy her new home.

It seemed noisier than it had been in Wapping, but perhaps that was because it was Saturday night, the busiest day of the week. After a hard day's work, many men went to quench their thirst at the Star Inn near by, and it was nearly midnight before the last of them went home and silence fell, broken only by the creaking of the house-signs as a strong east wind whistled through the narrow street.

Suddenly Anne was awakened by shouts,

and a crackling noise. A flickering light showed up the unfamiliar objects in her room. She sprang out of bed and ran to the window. A house on the other side of the road was on fire. It was a sheet of flame, and men and women, some in their night clothes, were carrying furniture out of the house next door.

By this time all the family were awake and looking out of the windows.

"I'm glad it's not on our side of the road," said Peter, but almost as he spoke the strong wind, swirling and eddying round the houses, blew clouds of burning sparks across the street, and into the yard of the Star Inn. Here there were piles of straw and wooden outhouses which quickly flared up, and in a few minutes the whole inn was ablaze. The terrified inhabitants rushed out into the street in their night-clothes. Some threw boxes and trunks full of their belongings out of the windows.

Edward's father had ordered all of them to dress. Suddenly a neighbour who was out in the street shouted, "Quick, get out



while there is yet time, your own house is on fire."

Driven by the fierce wind, the flames had spread to sheds and out-buildings between them and the inn, and had attacked the house next to theirs. After a hot rainless summer, everything was dry and burned like tinder. Their neighbour was a candle-maker, and had stores of tallow and oil, and other combustibles, so that within a few seconds his house was a sheet of flames, and these rapidly

caught the nearest part of Richard Fuller's. This was the side where the narrow staircase led up to the bedrooms, and it was ablaze before anyone could get down it. The whole family was trapped. Peter looked to see whether they could climb down from the window, but it was a long way, and they had no ropes.

"Quick," said Richard, "up to the attic. You lead the way, Edward. We can get out on the roof and along to the next house."



They rushed up the dark and narrow stairs to the attic ; Edward forced open the dormer window and squeezed out. There was a wide

wooden gutter, and he lowered himself on to it, and tested its strength. It seemed strong enough to bear his full weight. He turned and said, "You come now, Peter, and you can help the others across." Peter lowered himself and walked the few steps along the guttering and reached the dormer window of the next house. It was shuttered fast, and he banged on it and shouted, "Open ! open ! for God's sake." But no one came.

Meanwhile the others waited anxiously. The neighbour who had warned them was watching from the street, and when he saw that Peter could not get in, he ran to the street door. It was locked.

Smoke was filling the Fullers' house. "Shall we all get out ?" asked Mary.

"I don't think the guttering would hold more than one at a time," said Edward.

The men in the street were now breaking down the door, and, a few moments later, to Peter's great relief, the window and shutters were opened. Anne was already on the guttering. She looked down and shuddered,

but Edward cried, "Look at Peter, hold my hand and you will soon be across." Peter reached out and grasped her other hand, and drew her to safety. Mary followed.

Although smoke was now pouring out of the window, Richard waited until Edward was across before he climbed out. He was a heavy man and he lowered himself gently. The guttering creaked ominously, and Richard kept hold of the window-ledge. The roof was steep and he dared not try to climb up it, for if he slipped he would crash to the street below. He hesitated. Then he brought his heel down on the tiles just above the guttering. One of the tiles cracked. He struck again and again until he had made a hole which gave him a firm foothold. Step by step he broke footholds and so made his way across.

In a minute they were all safely in the street, looking at the flames licking hungrily up towards the window they had so recently left. Good neighbours had dragged out some of their belongings, and piled them in the



street. The fire was spreading along both sides of the road, and also down Fish Street Hill towards the river.

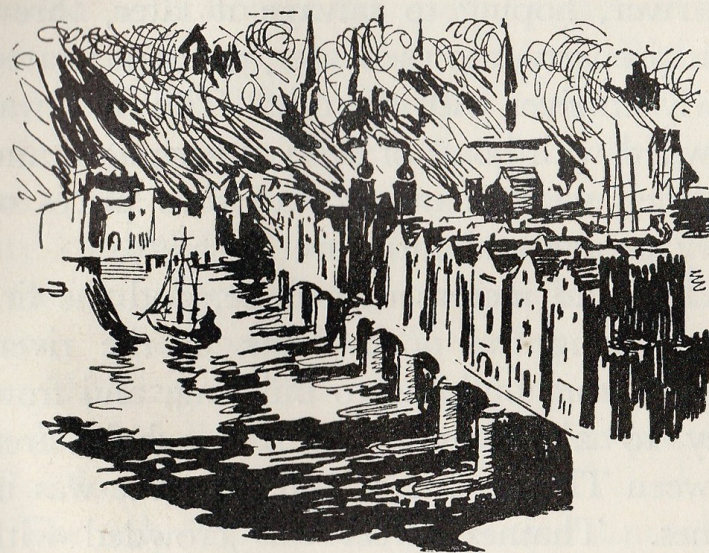
"How did it start?" asked Richard, as he thanked his neighbours for saving some of the furniture.

"They say Baker Farynor came home late from the Star Inn and dropped some embers in trying to light a candle. The embers must have smouldered and then burst into flames."

All along the street people were getting their belongings from the houses and piling them up on the cobblestones. As the fire advanced they retreated, carrying what they could with them. The flames beat steadily from the east and north, and people moved down towards the river and then along Thames Street.

Someone had fetched the Lord Mayor, but he had seen many fires in London before. They were always breaking out. He grumbled at being disturbed early on a Sunday morning. "It will soon go out," he said, and went back to bed.

But it did not go out. In Thames Street were many sheds and warehouses filled with spirit, hemp and oil. These burned even more fiercely than the dry wooden houses, and the fire leaped ahead. By early morning several hundred houses had been burned down, and hundreds more were burning. By eight o'clock the gate-tower of London Bridge was alight, and a number of houses on the bridge, while along the wharves great piles of hay, coal and timbers were flaring like huge bonfires.

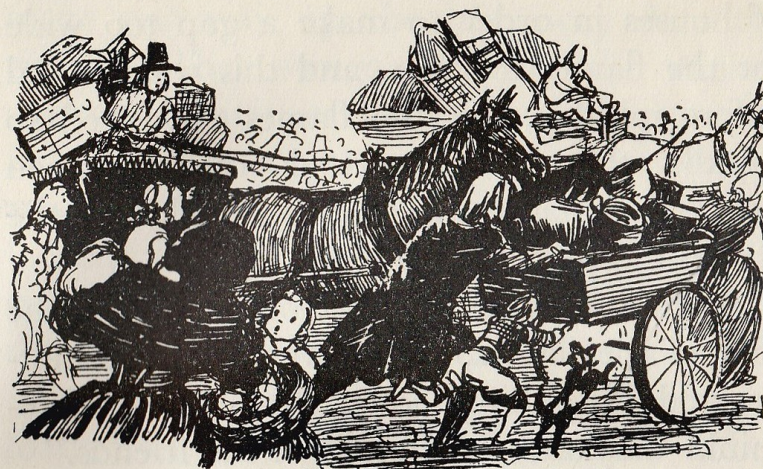


XI

Fugitives

TOGETHER with crowds of other unfortunates, Mary, Richard and their families retreated before the fire, carrying what they could with them. People who had boats loaded them and rowed away, and those in houses near the river, hoping to salvage it later, threw their property into the water, where it floated slowly up river with the tide. The river was crowded with boats of every description, and boatmen were charging enormous prices to carry people and furniture to safety.

The wind increased in force, and the fire swept along the north bank of the river, leaping from building to building, and from alley to alley, and soon the whole area between Thames Street and the river was in flames. Thames Street was crowded with



men, women and children, trucks, and carts loaded with household goods, and sick folk being carried on mattresses. Mary, Richard and the others fled with the crowd.

Still there was little attempt to fight the fire. The only fire-fighting apparatus in the city consisted of brass handsquirts, casks of water on wheels, leather buckets, ladders and axes. These were utterly useless against a fire the size of this. A pumping apparatus on London Bridge had already been put out of action by the fire.

The only hope was to pull down a number

of houses in order to make a gap too wide for the flames to cross, and this was started before midday, but the flames advanced so rapidly that they overtook the workmen before they had completed their task, and the flames swept on relentlessly.

A man near Richard shouted above the roar of the flames, "The Mayor is too half-hearted in pulling down the houses. Me-thinks they are the houses of his friends."

"Aye," replied Richard, "and I think he fears he may be called upon to rebuild them afterwards."

Another man shouted, "The fire was started by the Catholics. The Papists are trying to destroy our city. Down with the Papists !"

The cry was taken up by others, and soon the crowds were shouting "Down with the Papists !" Others shouted, "It is the Dutch, they are throwing fireballs into the city."

"Come," said Richard to Mary, "let us get away from this mob. Instead of fleeing westwards, let us turn towards the north and

make our way up the hill away from the river." They struggled across the packed stream of fugitives and turned into a side lane. At the top they could see the slender tapering spire of a church, but even as they looked, flames burst out from the top of the spire. The fire was now spreading in a fresh direction, and Richard turned westwards once more. They were tired, and put down their loads and rested every few minutes. They turned north again, and entered Cannon Street, which was so crowded with carts, trunks and piles of goods that it was almost impossible to move along at all. The steeple of the church they had seen burning had now fallen in and the whole church was blazing. It was growing late in the afternoon, and the wanderers looked for shelter for the night. They followed a number of others into a church and there they set down their burdens and threw themselves down to rest.

Night fell, but the fire continued to rage, and the lurid light of the flames was reflected

from the great clouds of smoke that rolled rapidly towards the west. During the night the roar of the fire increased as it approached the church where they were sheltering, and long before dawn they were forced to move on once more. Behind them the fire stretched in a great arch across the sky.

When dawn came the fire was eating its way northwards and westwards, and the most important parts of the city were now in danger. Under some of the streets were hollowed elm trunks which carried the water supply. These were broken open, and most of what little water there was ran to waste, with the result that others who needed water farther along the line of supply found none at all. In a frantic scramble each sought to save his own property.

"The whole city seems doomed," said Richard. "I fear we can hope to save little but our lives. We must leave almost everything, and make our way out of the city altogether. The wind is still in the east, so that the fire continues to spread most quickly

to the west. Let us skirt the fire to the north and then move eastwards.

"Let us go back to Wapping, Mother," said Peter. "Perhaps the fire hasn't spread that way very far."

"Yes, Peter, we will all go back to Water Lane. Let us hope it is safe there."



They accordingly turned to the north-east, into a street which was not yet burning, although dense clouds of smoke and drifts of sparks and burning particles were constantly passing overhead.

They hurried along with a number of other refugees. The houses in a turning to the right were burning furiously.

"Look!" cried Peter. "There is someone waving her arms at that window."

A woman was standing at an open upstairs window and gazing in terror at the long tongues of flame that were licking round the doorway and leaping across from the neighbouring roof towards her own. She was shouting something, but nothing could be heard above the roar of the flames.



"Stay here," said Richard to Mary and Anne, and with Peter and Edward he ran towards the house. They approached the doorway, but flames were darting out, and the heat was intense.

"We can do nothing there," said Richard,

"we must try and get up from outside. Peter, you climb up on my shoulders, and Edward get on to Peter's, and perhaps you can pull yourself up by the guttering and onto the roof."

Edward scrambled up, and dragged himself onto a sloping roof. He crawled up and then along the top until he was level with the gable. He turned and made his way along the gable-ridge until he was just above the window. He leaned down to help the woman up, but she shook her head.

"My little boy," she said, "he is ill."

"Can you pass him up to me?" called Edward, and the woman lifted out a little boy wrapped in a blanket.

Edward leaned down and grasped the blanket and dragged it up.

"Climb up if you can," he shouted to the woman, as he began to crawl slowly and carefully along the ridge of the roof. He eased himself down the slope with great difficulty, then, try as he would, he could not lower the boy sufficiently for Peter to

take him. Sparks and thick smoke were flying round him all the time.

"Get down, Peter," he called. "I will throw down the blanket, and you must hold it out and I will drop the boy into it."

He unwrapped the little boy, and dropped the blanket. Mary and Anne had joined the others, and they all four held out the blanket. Edward dropped the child carefully and he landed safely in the blanket. Fortunately the mother was unable to see what was happening. She was still trying to pull herself up onto the roof ridge, but she seemed to have no strength in her arms.

Edward climbed back. He leaned over and caught the woman's hands and began to pull. The others were watching in the street below, and suddenly, to their horror, they saw Edward lose his balance, topple over and begin sliding head foremost down the sloping roof of the dormer.

"Quick," cried Richard, "the blanket." And tumbling the unfortunate infant out of



it, he rushed to hold it out where Edward might fall.

Edward stuck in his toes and tried to stop himself with his hands. The slope was less steep where the dormer-roof joined the main roof, and he managed to stop himself. He hung on desperately, and then began slowly to crawl round so that he could grasp the window ledge. The woman gripped his arm, and he pulled himself up. He stood there trembling for a minute, but there was no time to lose.

"Can you get a blanket?" he asked, and the woman climbed in through the smoke. She reappeared with a blanket, and Edward climbed with it to the ridge once more. It



was now possible to help the woman up without leaning over so far. This time he was able to haul her to the ridge, and then he helped her along and down to where Peter was standing on Richard's shoulders to assist her down.

At last they were both safely down, and they all set off as fast as possible, Mary carrying the little boy.

To their left the streets were undamaged, but on their right was a great expanse of smoking ruins. The remains of the larger buildings were still burning, and here and there the gaunt broken shells of churches and other stone and brick buildings stood up above the blackened rubble. The air was thick with smoke, and it was impossible to see very far, but the lurid glare from the south-east showed that the fire was spreading eastwards against the wind. The fire had not advanced so quickly in that direction, however, and before long they had left it behind and were able to breathe air not choking with smoke.

"Thank God the fire has not yet spread beyond the city walls," said Mary. "Our home at Wapping is still safe. It is not very big, but how lucky we are, when so many poor souls have lost everything and have nowhere to go. Richard offered to share his home with us, and now we can offer ours to him."

They hurried on, passed outside the city and turned towards Wapping; and so the Fletchers returned to Water Lane once more.



XII

The end of Old London

BEFORE entering their old home, they turned and looked back at the city. A great column of smoke nearly a mile wide was rising into the sky. Night was coming on but it was as light as day, but the light was lurid and terrifying. They turned away, shuddering, and entered the house.

Mary made the house as comfortable as possible, put the little boy to bed and sent for the doctor. She gladly gave the boy and his mother a home until they were able to go to some friends in the country.

All Monday night the whole western sky was a mass of flames, as the fire spread to north, west and east. On Tuesday morning it seemed dangerously nearer to Wapping, in spite of the wind.

"I think the boys and I had better go and see what we can do to help," said Richard.

"Yes, do," said Mary. "You may be able to help some unfortunate people to save some of their belongings."

"Aye, and perhaps assist in pulling down and blowing up buildings, to stay the flames," added Richard.

They found plenty of work to do. The fire was still spreading ; in fact it advanced more quickly eastwards on Tuesday than it had done on Monday. Tower Street began to burn, and Richard and the boys helped many people to carry out their furniture. The fire burned furiously along both sides of the narrow street, and Richard looked anxiously towards the Tower of London, where the Navy's gunpowder was stored. If the fire should reach that, there would be a terrible explosion, which would destroy buildings far around, as well as the bridge and shipping on the river. The Lieutenant of the Tower, however, had already removed the powder. Men were working hard to save

the Tower, and seamen from the dockyard at Deptford hastened to pull down houses in Mark Lane and Tower Street. Above the roar of the flames came the thunder of repeated explosions as wide stretches of buildings were levelled to the ground with gunpowder.

Richard, Peter and Edward worked with the seamen throughout the day. They felt that in fighting the fire there, they were fighting to save their home as well, for if the wind should change, the flames could soon sweep through the narrow river-side streets to Wapping. At last their efforts were successful ; when the fire had almost reached the Tower, the flames failed to leap the broad space that had been cleared, and it died down. Away to the north-west, however, it was still raging, and as the three turned homewards, grimed with smoke and soot, they could see the fierce glow in the sky.

Mary was very relieved to hear that the fire seemed to have stopped moving eastwards, and all went to sleep that night with

thankful hearts ; but the lurid glare in the sky reminded them of the terrible destruction that was still going on in the city.

That Tuesday had indeed been a day of tragedy and terror. The fire approached Cheapside early in the morning. It was a wide street, and if the wall of fire which was burning up from the river could have been stayed there, much of the city might have been saved, but while each tried to save his own belongings, little was done to stop the fire spreading, and it burned on almost without hindrance. The wind blew more strongly than ever, and clouds of live sparks which were whirled up into the air fell on dry roofs of other buildings and started fresh fires. The fires swept northwards and reached the city wall. Westwards the sea of flames lapped round the great cathedral of Old St. Paul's and passed on, leaping the city walls and spreading through the densely populated 'liberties' beyond. The mass of fire advanced with bewildering speed and rushed like a torrent down Ludgate Hill.



Men had been working all day levelling buildings on both sides of the Fleet river to make a broad open lane, but they were forced back by the scorching heat and the whole day's effort was in vain as the flames swept on. The wind increased in violence, and Fleet Street was reduced to ruins in a few hours.

The fleeing crowds were denser than ever, men, women and children, a few with horses and carts, all in helpless confusion, and with only one thought : to get out of the burning city. Sometimes a fresh fire would break out ahead of the people, and they would scatter to find another way of escape. For miles around the city open spaces were strewn with all kinds of movables, and with refugees lying beside the few goods they had been able to rescue.

Throughout the day King Charles rode from place to place in the city, encouraging those who were pulling down the houses or throwing water on the flames. At one place he sprang from his horse, and, seizing a spade,

took a share in the work where danger and difficulty seemed greatest.

There was a fairly large open space round St. Paul's Cathedral, and many of the business men round about had piled their goods in the open churchyard, while booksellers had stacked thousands of books inside the church. This place, at least, they thought, was safe, and when the fire passed by, earlier in the day, they felt secure. But, as darkness fell, burning débris from the fires still burning round the Cathedral was blown onto the roof,



and the dry roof-timbers caught fire and burned furiously. Stone and burning timber from the roof fell in. So great was the heat that the lead from the roof melted and poured to the floor, where it collected and then flowed in streams into the street. All night on Tuesday and all Wednesday, St. Paul's continued burning.

During Tuesday night the strong wind, which had caused the rapid spread of the fire, began to drop, and gradually the fire was got under control. On Wednesday the fire burned furiously in the north about Cripplegate, and fires continued burning in many parts of the city, but almost everywhere the flames could now be brought under control. Smoke rose in dense clouds from the smouldering ruins, and hung low over the city, as there was now no wind to blow it away. By evening, after burning for four nights and days, the great fire of London died down.

Thousands of homeless citizens were camped in the fields round the city, and

the king issued Royal Proclamations setting up markets to supply them with food, and opening all churches, schools and similar buildings to shelter them and their goods. On Thursday Richard, Mary, Anne and the boys took what food they could spare and walked out to Moorfields where many of these unfortunate people were. As they approached they saw a few men on horseback riding out from the city.

"Look !" cried Anne. "It's the King."

King Charles rode forward and the homeless people crowded round him, their upturned faces full of anxiety and hope.

"Good people of London," he said, "it is a sad sight to see our great city in ruins and its people homeless. This disaster was not the result of any Papist plot nor evil action of Dutch or French, but a judgment that has fallen upon us directly from God. All danger is now past, you need fear nothing from our enemies. I, your king, by the grace of God, will live and die among you, and I will care for you all."

The people were then told of the arrangements to set up markets to ensure supplies of food, and of the help they would receive in finding shelter.

Richard and Mary gave the provisions they had brought to a family who were sheltering in a tent, and then turned rather sadly homewards.

"What terrible blows London has had to bear these last two years," said Richard.

"She will recover," said Mary. "Neither plague nor fire can destroy our London. This fire has burned away the last traces of the plague, and London will rise again, a more beautiful and a far healthier city than before."

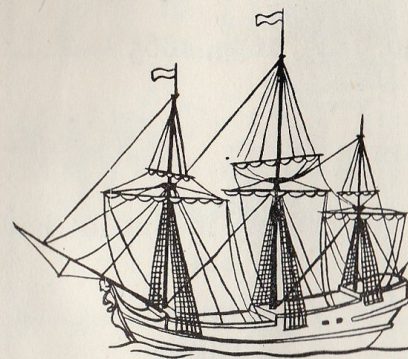
And Mary was right.



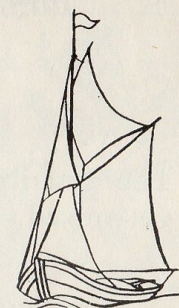
EXERCISES

CHAPTER I

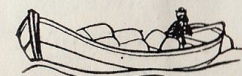
1. How old was Peter when King Charles was crowned in 1660?



A



B



C



D

2. Here are drawings of some vessels that the Fletchers could have seen on the river Thames. You will find their names on pages 4 and 5. Can you say which is which?

3. Make two columns in your notebook :

<i>Peter's pastimes</i>	<i>A modern boy's pastimes unknown to Peter</i>

See how many you can write in each column.

4. In which of the following years did the plague visit London :

1615, 1625, 1630, 1645, 1655, 1665

CHAPTER II

1. The describing words (adjectives) in this list have got mixed. Can you sort them out ?

jingling	clothes
deserted	bells
ragged	air
red	street
poisonous	vapour
choking	cross

2. Charles tells about his adventure, but he has left out some words. Fill them in for him.

"We followed a party of . . . until they went into a . . . It was late and we soon lost our sense

of Anne asked how we had to go. Suddenly a church bell began to and an old woman hobbled along the street. She stopped at a door marked with a red I guessed it was the"



3. Arrange these pictures in the right order, and give each a title or write a sentence about it.

4. When the children reached home, certain things were done to try to prevent infection by the plague. Arrange them in the order in which they happened :

Charles and Anne were washed.

They undressed.

Mr. Fletcher cut Anne's long hair close to her head.

Their father burnt their clothes.

Anne's hair was burnt.

Brimstone and saltpetre were sprinkled on the fire.

Charles's hair was cut very short.

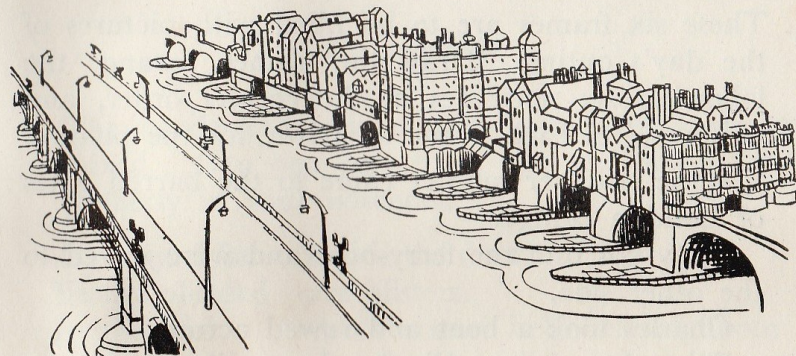
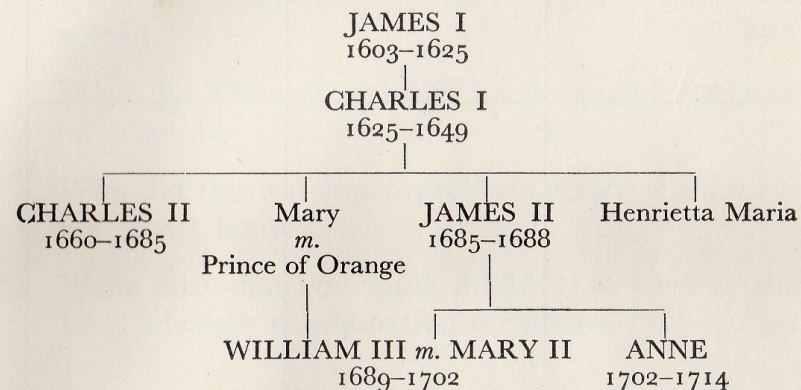
The children were sent to bed.

A choking vapour filled the room.

CHAPTER III

- Using the map at the front of the book, draw a sketch map of the Thames from London Bridge to Greenwich. Mark with a different colour the route followed by each member of the Fletcher family back from Greenwich.
- On the opposite page is a family tree of the Stuarts. Names of kings and queens are shown in capital letters. Use it to answer these questions:
 - Was the king the Fletchers saw Charles I or Charles II?
 - Who was that king's father?

- When did Charles II become king?
- How long did he reign?
- Who were his sisters?
- Write down the Stuart kings and queens in the order in which they reigned.



- Here are two pictures, one of old London Bridge and one of London Bridge as it is today. Make a list of all the differences you can find between them.

4. These six frames are to be filled with pictures of the day's outing. Draw the frames, arrange the following six sentences in the correct order, and write one in each frame as a title for the picture.

Anne and her mother came to the barred gates of London Bridge.

They got into the ferry-boat and were rowed to the other side.

Charles took a boat and rowed across.

They set out to walk the three miles to Greenwich.

Mrs. Fletcher and Anne walked across London Bridge in the morning.

The family returned from Greenwich to the ferry.

CHAPTER IV

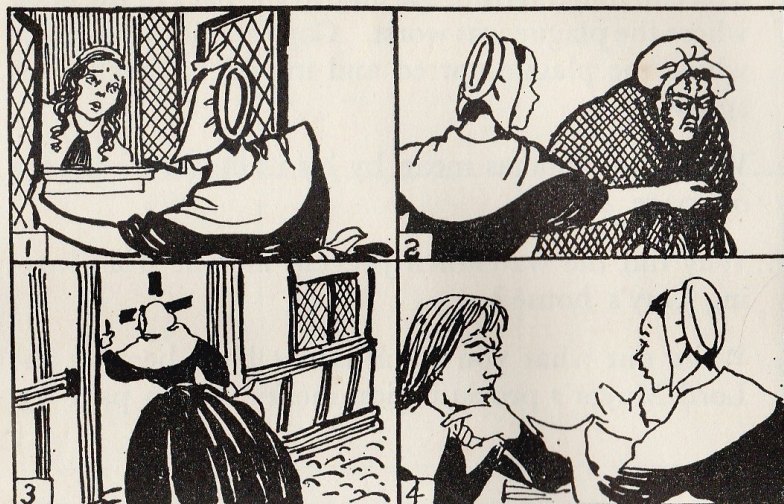
1. You can find out from the map at the back of the book where the plague was worst. Copy it, mark the place where the plague started and in which directions it spread.
2. What did Thomas mean by his unfinished sentence on page 48?
3. Why did the watchmen prevent anyone from leaving Guy's house?
4. Write out what you think might have been in the Lord Mayor's proclamation mentioned on page 43.

CHAPTER V

1. The heads and tails of these sentences have got mixed. Can you sort them out and write them properly in your notebook?

A haggard face	sealed the door.
Bertha pleaded	are blisters.
Bertha said	that she must help her neighbour.
Mary said	that she already had the plague.
The old nurse	sank into a stupor.
The watchman	appeared at the window.
Blains	with Mary.
Beth	was sent away.

2. Do you know what would be done with a person suffering from an infectious disease like the plague today?



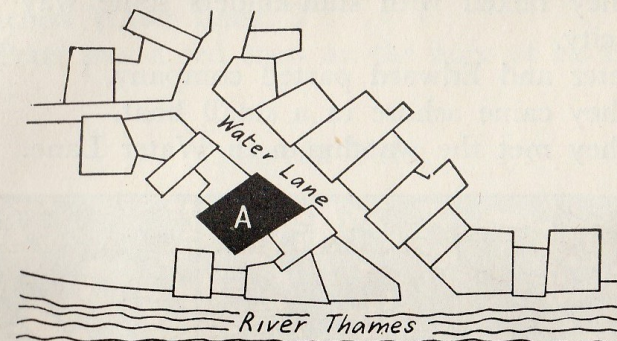
3. Here are four pictures showing Mary's kind action. Arrange them in the right order and give each a title, or write a sentence about it.

CHAPTER VI

1. Say which of the following are true :

- (a) Thomas fell ill five days after Bertha died.
- (b) Mary sent the watchman for the doctor.
- (c) Charles and Anne were sent away, out of reach of infection.
- (d) Mary nursed her husband until he died.

- (e) Charles fell ill on the fourth day after his father's death.
(f) Mary recovered from the plague.



2. This is a diagram of part of Water Lane where the Fletchers lived. A marks their house.

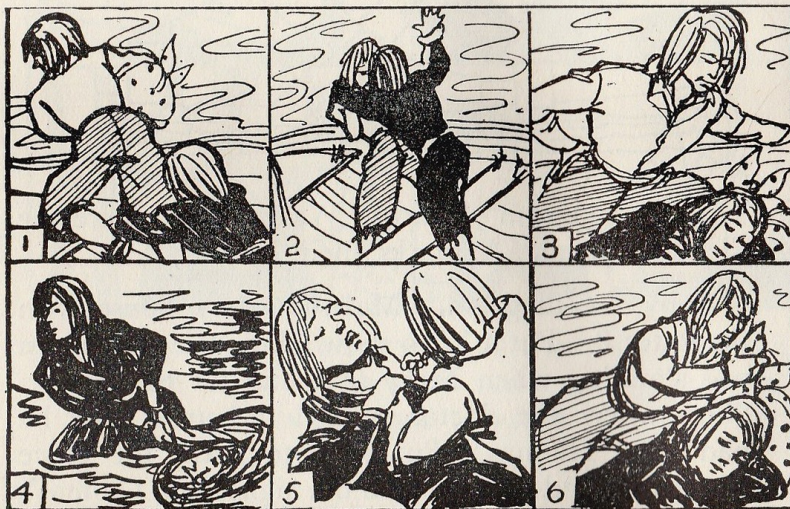
Copy the diagram. Mark Bertha's house with the letter B. Put a W to show where the watchman was standing when Mary sent him for the doctor. Show where the doctor crossed the street after he had seen Thomas. Put a X to mark the place where the dead-cart stopped the night after Thomas's death.

CHAPTER VII

1. The sentences overleaf describe incidents during the boys' two-day walk to London. Arrange them in order and, if you can, say which happened on the first day.

Peter and James slept in a boat.
 They sheltered in a shed on a riverside wharf.
 They followed a desolate track, across mud-flats.
 They talked with stall-holders some way from
 the city.

Peter and Edward parted company.
 They came ashore in a small boat.
 They met the watchman in Water Lane.



2. Here are six pictures. Arrange them in order, and write a sentence about each.
3. Choose the true sentence in each of the following pairs.

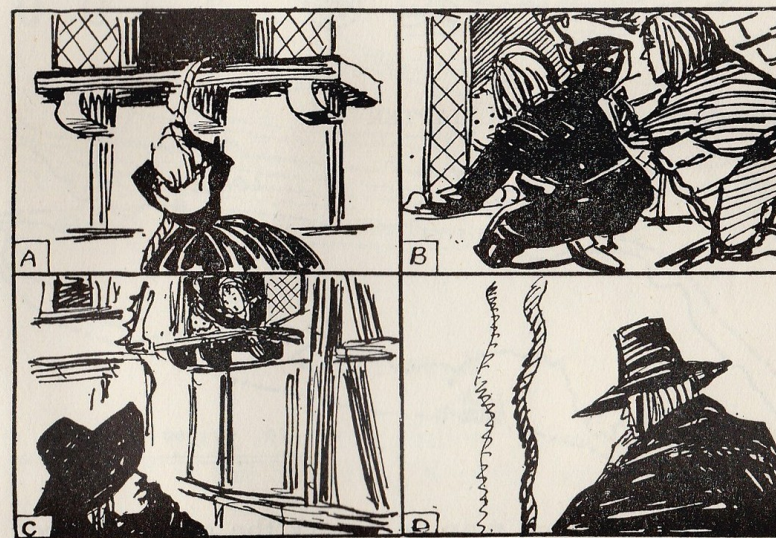
Peter's ship had been six months at sea.
 Peter's ship had been two years at sea.

James became a good friend to Peter.
 James tried to do Peter an injury.

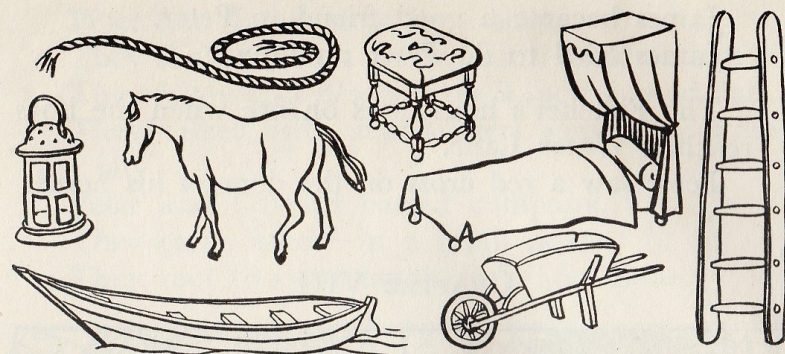
The Fletcher's house was on fire when the boys
 reached Water Lane.

Peter saw a red cross on the door of his home.

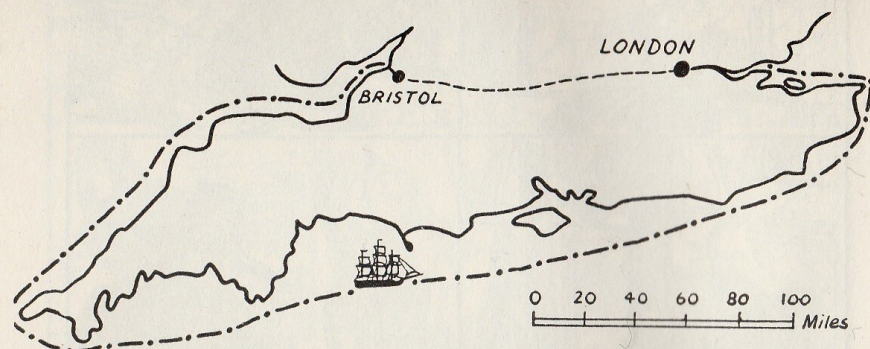
CHAPTER VIII



1. There is something wrong with each of these pictures. Can you find what it is?
2. What name should we use nowadays for an apothecary?
3. Which of the things in the picture at the top of page 150 were in Anne's escape?

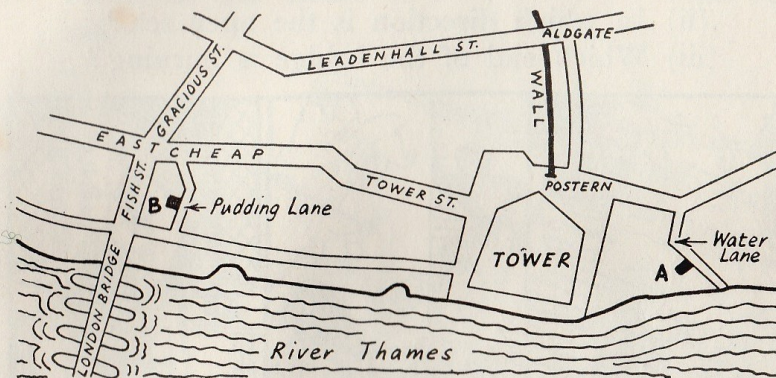


CHAPTER IX



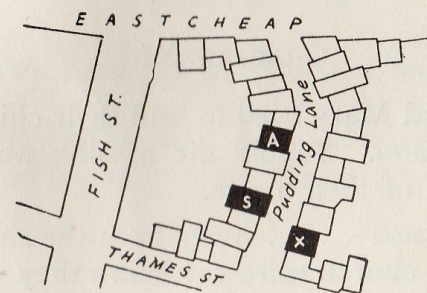
1. Copy this sketch map and mark the route followed by Edward's father. Supposing he returned by land, do you think it took more or less time?
2. Which members of the Fletcher and Fuller families earned money by :
 - spinning
 - sail-making
 - biscuit-making

3. This diagram of part of Old London shows two houses, A and B. Who lived in A? Who lived in B in the spring of 1666? Who slept in B on the night of September 1st, 1666? Which house was bigger?



CHAPTER X

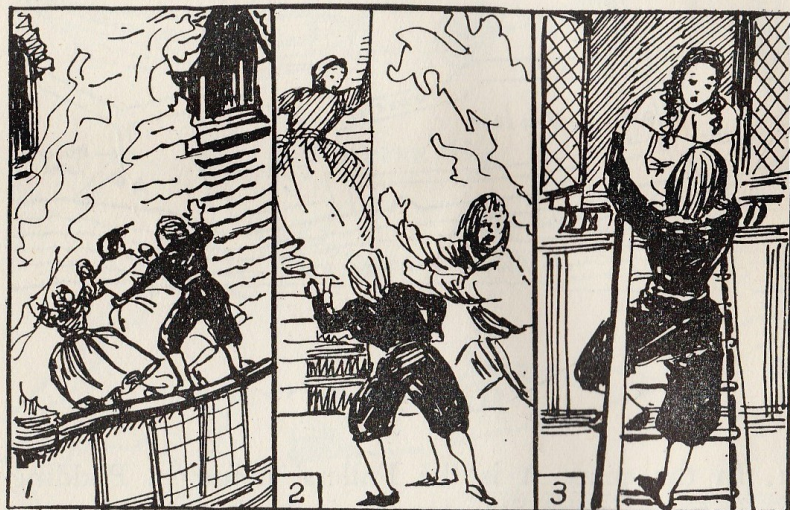
1. In the map, A is the Fullers' house in Pudding Lane, S is the Star Inn, X is the house where the



fire started. Copy it and mark the direction of the wind. Show by arrows how the fire spread.

2. Look at the picture on page 115. In it you are looking towards the north bank of the river Thames.

- (i) Which way is the wind blowing?
- (ii) In which direction is the open sea?
- (iii) Which end of the bridge is burning?



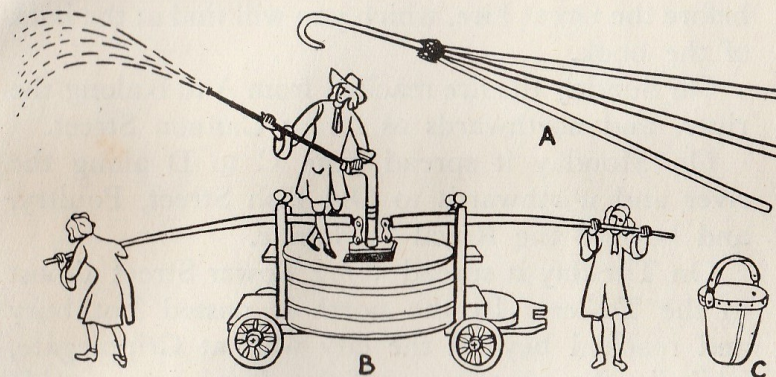
3. What is wrong with these pictures?

CHAPTER XI

1. Richard and Mary tried to lead their children away from the mob. Supply the missing words in this description of their route.

They turned away from the river. When they saw a church spire catch fire they went to the

. . . . Then they turned again and entered Street. It was late and they went into a to rest for the night. Next day they walked in a ly direction and finally left the fire behind. When they reached they found the Fletchers' old house in was still safe.



2. Here is a picture of fire-fighting apparatus used at the time of the Fire of London. How do you think each article was used?

CHAPTER XII

1. Make two headings in your notebook :

<i>In the Fletchers' home</i>	<i>In my home</i>

Then write the following in the correct column.
Some things may go in both.

coal, spinning-wheel, electric light, gas-cooker,
fountain-pen, radio, refrigerator, bread, cigar-
ettes.

2. Look at the map of London north of the Thames, before the Great Fire, which you will find at the back of the book.

On Sunday the fire reached from A to B along the river, and northwards as far as Cannon Street.

On Monday it spread from C to D along the river and northwards to Old Fish Street, Poultry, and beyond the Royal Exchange.

On Tuesday it spread along Tower Street almost to the Tower. In the north it passed Lothbury and reached beyond the city wall at Cripplegate, while in the west it engulfed a huge area outside Newgate and Ludgate and far along Fleet Street past Fetter Lane.

Copy the map and shade in with different types of shading the areas destroyed each day of the fire.

3. Can you think of events which have happened in this century which seem to prove Mary right in what she said about London being indestructible?

